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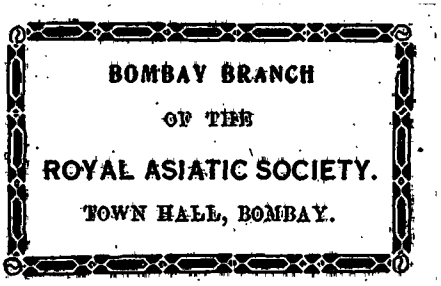

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A HISTORY

OF THE

COMMONWEALTH OF FLORENCE,

FROM

THE EARLIEST INDEPENDENCE OF THE COMMUNE TO THE FALL OF THE REPUBLIC IN 1531.

BY

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BOOK VI.

FROM THE PEACE WITH FILIPPO MARIA VISCONTI, A.D. 1428,

TO

THE DEATH OF COSMO DE' MEDICI, A.D. 1464.

32 YEARS.

HISTORY

OF THE

COMMONWEALTH OF FLORENCE.

CHAPTER I.

Death of Giovanni de' Medici—his character—Cosmo de' Medici—Dissimulation of Italian politicians—Giovanni de' Medici rebuilds the church of San Lorenzo—His funeral—His descendants—Discontent caused by the "catasta" at Volterra—rebellion of Volterra—Clas s dissensions in Volterra—The city submits to Florence—Its punishment—Fortebraccio and Rinaldo degli Albizzi scheme to make the Republic declare war against Lucca—Paolo Guinigi, lord of Lucca—sends an embassy to Florence—False and equivocating reply of the Signory—Niccolò da Uzzano opposes war with Lucca—Cosmo de' Medici in favour of the war—Prevalent feeling in Florence with respect to the war—Commencing consolidation of a Medicean party—other temptations urging Florence to the war—Jacopo Viviani, envoy of Paolo Guinigi—his treason to his master—Popular vote in favour of war with Lucca—Debate between Niccolò da Uzzano and Rinaldo degli Albizzi—The territory of Lucca overrun—Accusations made against the Florentine commissaries at the camp—Astorre Gianni—atrocities of which he was guilty—His punishment—Accusations against Rinaldo degli Albizzi—His conduct under accusation—Neri Capponi and Alamanno Salviati, new commissaries—Their plans for the prosecution of the war—overruled by "the Ten" at home—Brunellesco's plan of laying Lucca under water—its failure—The commissaries recalled—Giovanni Guicciardini and Dino Gucci appointed commissaries—Jews authorised to practise usury in Florence—The war languishes—but there are symptoms that it may spread—Paolo Guinigi sends for aid to the Duke of Milan—Visconti sends Piccinino into Tuscany—and despatches Sforza to the assistance of Lucca—Siege of Lucca raised—The Florentines seek to make terms with Sforza—Terms of the bargain made with him—Revolt of Lucca against Paolo Guinigi—The Lucchese

A.D. 1429. send envoys to Florence—Shuffling answer of Florence—Fresh preparations for subduing Lucca—The "Ten of War" interfere with the plans of their general—disastrous result—dismay in Florence—Embassy to Venice—Balance of power in Italy—General view of the foreign policy of Florence—Contrast of her government with that of Venice—Venice at the request of Florence makes war on the Visconti—Death of Pope Martin—His persistent hatred of Florence—Election of Eugenius IV.—Pestilence in Florence—Gloomy state of things at Florence—Fresh financial difficulties—Indecisive progress of the war—Peace made on the 26th April, 1433—Results of the war.

On the 20th of February, 1429, died Giovanni de' Medici, having by the whole course of his life, and more especially by the establishment of that reformed method of taxation which had for so many years been the great object of the popular desire, and which the last efforts of his public life succeeded in attaining, laid the foundation of the greatness of his family. Notwithstanding the insinuations which have been mentioned, to the effect that his liberalities towards the people were designedly calculated to obtain political influence, the general voice of his contemporaries and of history seems to justify us in attributing to him a higher degree of moral worth than can be found in any one of his descendants. Macchiavelli is not wont to take too favourable a view of human character under any circumstances, nor to allow his judgment to be dazzled by mere showy appearances of popular virtues. But his estimate of Giovanni de' Medici is a favourable and indeed, for him, a genially laudatory one.

"Shortly afterwards," he writes, having given a detailed report of the last good advice Giovanni gave to his sons Cosmo and Lorenzo on his death-bed,—advice which, however worthy of rehearsal on the score of its originality it may have seemed to the sixteenth-century historian, does not appear sufficiently new or striking to merit the special attention of a generation well schooled in the moralities of many copy-books;—"Shortly afterwards, Giovanni de' Medici died, and left a most strong and universal regret

for his loss throughout the entire city, as his many excellent qualities merited. He was a merciful and charitable man; and not only gave assistance to those who asked it of him, but very frequently unasked, succoured the poor in their need. He felt kindly towards all men; was not chary of his tribute of praise to the good, nor of his compassion to the bad. He asked for none of the honours of the State, and enjoyed them all. He never went to the Palace if not specially invited."—(The busy frequenting of the *Palazzo Pubblico* was the sign of being an intriguing and ambitious politician, much as the haunting of a court might be held to have an analogous significance in a monarchical country.)—"He was a partisan of peace, and always sought to avoid war. He was always ready to assist men in their adversity and to forward their prosperity. He was wholly unstained by peculation, and was, on the contrary, a contributor to the wealth of the community. As a magistrate he was gracious and affable; not endowed with much eloquence, but abundantly gifted with sagacity and prudence. His outward appearance was of a melancholic cast; in conversation, however, he was agreeable and facetious. He died enormously rich in treasure, but richer still in good repute and in the good will of his fellow-citizens. And this inheritance, not only that of his wealth but that of his good qualities, was not only maintained but was increased by his son Cosmo."* A.D. 1429

Cosmo, however, had already shown symptoms of a disposition more ambitious and less moderate than that of his father. At the time when the old banker's answer to the overtures of Rinaldo degli Albizzi and the aristocracy in the matter of the new tax law, and the scheme for the reduction of the fourteen minor guilds to seven, became known in the city, and the credit and popularity of the Medici rose in consequence to a very high pitch, many of

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. i. p. 251.

A.D. 1429. Giovanni de' Medici's friends had been anxious that he should avail himself of the occasion to organize a strong political party in the Commonwealth. All the prudence and moderation possible could not prevent the formation of a very strong party feeling in the city. Say and do what Messer Giovanni might, the citizens would look on Niccolò da Uzzano and Rinaldo degli Albizzi as the heads of one party, and on Giovanni de' Medici as the head of the other. And it only depended on the will of the latter to assume the position thus made for him, to blow the smouldering fire of partisan feeling into a flame, and place himself avowedly and prominently at the head of one, and that assuredly the most powerful party in the State. And among those who were most anxious that the old banker should thus act was his eldest son Cosmo.* He urged his father by every means in his power to avail himself of that tide in the affairs of their country which set so strongly in the direction fitted to lead their house on to fortune. He would fain have had the prudent old man say and do all that might so easily have been said and done for the widening of the breach between the two sections of the citizens, and the stimulating of the popular animosity against the aristocracy. But this was exactly what Giovanni de' Medici would not do. He steadily resisted all the persuasion and urging of his family and friends, and continued to the end, as he had lived, desirous—to all appearance—of giving his hours and his energies to the affairs of his own counting-house, and anxious to heal rather than to envenom the party discords of the Commonwealth. And any student of Florentine history would draw from the accounts of the conduct of this founder of the Medicean greatness upon this occasion an entire assurance that Giovanni de' Medici aimed at no such future,—save perhaps those who have had the opportunity of be-

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. i. p. 243.

coming thoroughly well versed in the specialities of Italian character. None but such persons would fail to be deceived by the patient long-sightedness of dissimulation, which is, and yet more was, deemed by Italians the perfection of political prudence, and by the all-watchful cautiousness which leads many a schemer among them, bound to a goal in one direction, to commence his course thither by turning both eyes and steps to a diametrically opposite quarter of the compass. A.D. 1429

Those who are conversant with all this will perhaps be inclined to attribute more weight to Gino Capponi's charges, and Niccolò da Uzzano's insinuations respecting the manner in which Messer Giovanni expended his vast wealth, than to the apparent moderation of his conduct. It may be that the old banker let "I dare not wait upon I would;" it may be that in these last years of his life, as in the case of so many another wearied politician, quiet, safety, and repose had risen in his estimate of their value, while the objects of ambition and worldly greatness had suffered that depreciation which the approaching fall of the curtain is wont to bring with it. It may be also that the father and son perfectly well understood each other, and that the sentiments of the dying Medici were analogous to those of the old Highland chieftain, of whom it is related, that while unwillingly submitting on his death-bed to the necessity of forgiving all his enemies, as impressed on him by his spiritual adviser, he warned his son that a father's curse would rest upon him if ever he should be guilty of a similar weakness.

Be this how it may, when the great citizen, the head of the banking firm known throughout Europe, was carried to his grave in the sacristy of the church of St. Lorenzo, the real foundation of the Medicean greatness had been surely and solidly laid. Cosmo, his son, never *was* guilty of the moderation or forbearance towards his political

A.D. 1429. adversaries which he had blamed in his father; and henceforth there is scarcely a page of Florentine history in which the names of the Medici do not occur, and assuredly not a public transaction in which they are not concerned.

Had Giovanni de' Medici lived a few years longer, it is probable that the fine church of St. Lorenzo would not have remained, as it has to the present day, with its western front unfinished. When the aged banker was carried thither by nine-and-twenty of his kinsmen to his grave, the building of the church had just been completed at his expense. It was his parish church. For the Medici, who had in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries lived, as most of the wealthiest Florentine families did at that time, in the neighbourhood of the Mercato Vecchio, in the parish of St. Thomas in the Market, the very heart of ancient Florence, had at the time of the first enlargement of the city migrated to the more open and airy region of St. Lorenzo, close to the new walls. In 1417 the old parish church of St. Lorenzo, which had formerly been the cathedral of Florence, was burned down, and it behoved the parishioners to rebuild it. This was about being done on the ancient foundations, when Giovanni de' Medici, by far the richest man in the parish, undertook to execute the work at his own cost, and gave the architect Filippo Brunellesco orders to prepare a plan for the new building on a far increased scale of size and splendour.*

The building was finished all but the west front, when the wealthy banker died. He was carried thither from his palace in the neighbourhood,—not the splendid pile now known under the name of the Palazzo Riccardi, for that was begun by his son Cosmo, in the year after his father's death,—on an open bier, with the venerable face exposed to the gaze of his grieving fellow-citizens; and was followed not only by the long array of his kinsmen of the family

* Osserv. Fiorent. vol. ii. p. 4.

name, but by the ambassadors of the Emperor, of the King of Naples, and of the Venetians, who happened then to be in Florence. The expenses of his obsequies amounted to three thousand golden florins.* Besides real property, Giovanni de' Medici is said, apparently on certain authority, to have left an hundred and seventy-eight thousand golden florins in hard cash. This wealth was, however, enormously increased by his descendants, who at one time had as many as sixteen branch banking establishments in the different capitals of Europe. They farmed also for several years the whole of the customs of the Commonwealth; an arrangement which, as may easily be imagined, brought into their coffers a ceaseless stream of enormous wealth.† And, however much it may be admitted to be a matter of doubt how far Messer Giovanni may have designedly used these riches as a means for the acquisition of political power, there can be no doubt at all that his sons, his grandson, and, most remarkably of all, his great-grandson Lorenzo the Magnificent, did so on a scale that the world has never seen elsewhere. A.D 142

From the two sons of Giovanni, Cosmo and Lorenzo, descended the two great branches of the family: the one—that which sprang from Cosmo the elder,—comprising all the more celebrated names of those brilliant men who prepared their country for despotism,—Lorenzo the Magnificent, the two Popes, Leo X. and Clement VII., Catherine who became the mother of kings of France, and Alexander the first Duke of Florence;—and the other, that which sprang from Lorenzo the younger, comprising all the line of Medicean Grand Dukes of Tuscany. The line of Cosmo, Giovanni's eldest son, became extinct‡ at the

* Ammirato, lib. xix. Gonf. 826; Osserv. Fiorentino, vol. i. p. 102.

† Osserv. Fiorentino, vol. ii. p. 6.

‡ With the exception of Catherine, who lived till 1589; but who, after her great marriage in France in 1533, exercised only a very indirect influence on the history and fortunes of the family.

A.D. 1429. death of Alexander in 1537, just one century all but two years from the time of the banker's death. The line of Lorenzo the younger, which ascended the Ducal throne in 1537 in the person of Cosmo the fourth in descent from him, became extinct in the person of Gian-Gastone, the seventh and last Medicean Grand Duke, in 1737, after exactly two centuries of sovereignty.

The possibilities of all this were contained in cautious Messer Giovanni's intelligent and industrious attention to his ledger, and his righteous or prudent support of a just system of taxation.

Just however as it indisputably was, the new law did not suffice to avoid all further troubles on the thorny subject of it. On the contrary, it had the effect of producing trouble at the very outset. If it was a just and equal law for the citizens, more properly so called, some of its provisions brought the inhabitants of the outlying portions of the Florentine dominions under the influence of the tax-gatherer's operations in a manner that had not previously been known. The people of Volterra, a city some fifty miles to the south of Florence, on the confines of the district called the Maremma,* felt this and writhed under it. It was disagreeable for the descendants of Etruscan Lucumones, who had been sovereigns on their lofty hill, and within their Cyclopean walls, for uncounted centuries before Florence had ever been heard of, to be legislated for, especially on such a tender point, by the upstarts of the new trading town on the Arno. But Florence had long since absorbed them, in obedience to that law of manifest destiny, which imperatively impelled her to enlarge her boundaries; and it was but a kicking against the pricks for little Volterra, despite her steep hill and her Cyclopean walls, to resist her fate. Nevertheless, Volterra sent a deputation of eighteen of her best citizens

* An abbreviation of "Marittima;" the district on the coast of the sea.

to Florence to remonstrate. But instead of listening to anything they had to say, the magistrates, to whom the imposition and collection of the new tax was entrusted, and who were armed, as has been seen, with very extensive and summary powers, simply threw the eighteen men of Volterra into prison; and there kept them, till wearied out with their imprisonment and the desire to get back to their homes, they promised on behalf of their countrymen unconditional submission to the will of the mistress city.* A.D. 1421

On their return to Volterra however, it was found that the inhabitants of the Etruscan hill city were by no means willing to be bound by the undertaking of their envoys. A man of the people, one Giusto Landini, stirred up his fellow-citizens to rise in revolt against the tyrant Commonwealth of the Arno, and to make him, Landini, their ruler. So there was a revolution in Volterra. And the city gates were shut under the huge arches of the old Etruscan walls; and arms were furbished up; and the townsfolk talked patriotism; and Messer Giusto, leaving his shop and his business to take care of themselves, silly man! betook himself to the citadel,—a peculiarly strong one—and became "Lord of Volterra." He sent off "ambassadors" to Siena and to Lucca, begging the aid of those republics to sustain him in his struggle against the overbearing Florentine tyranny. But Siena coldly replied that she must decline having anything to say to him, inasmuch as she was bound by existing treaties with Florence. And at Lucca the Volterran envoys fared worse still. Paolo Guinigi was the "*Signore*" of that little state; and he had got into trouble with his powerful neighbours on the banks of the Arno, in consequence of having permitted his son to accept service under the Duke of Milan in the late war between that state and Florence. He was extremely glad therefore to have an opportunity of

* Ammirato, lib. xix. Conf. 830.

A.D. 1429. doing anything that might have the effect of purging him of this sin, and reacquiring the good graces of the great Commonwealth. So the Lord of Lucca not only refused the overtures of poor Messer Giusto, but sent his ambassadors prisoners to Florence. The Florentines meanwhile, named a board of Ten, for the management of whatever steps should be necessary for reducing the people of Volterra to obedience. This board consisted, as was usually the case with similar commissions at this period of the history of the Commonwealth, of eight members of the aristocracy, among whom were Niccolò da Uzzano, and Rinaldo degli Albizzi; and two artisans, one of whom was Antonio di Puccio; this being the first mention of a name which shortly afterwards became one of the foremost in Florence. The Pucci are to the present day among the most wealthy of the Tuscan nobles, and the owners of one of the finest palaces in Florence. No doubt this Antonio di Puccio, though technically a member of one of the popular guilds, was already a rich man, and practically no longer one of "the people." And this nomination is doubtless illustrative of the manner in which the regulation requiring the nomination of a certain small proportion of the "people" on such commissions, was observed according to the letter, while the spirit of it was avoided.

These ten commissioners entrusted the more immediate superintendence of the expedition to be made against Volterra to Niccolò da Uzzano, and Rinaldo degli Albizzi; and they at once assembled a considerable body of troops, mainly from the different garrisons in the Pisan territory and the lower Valdarno, and marched them to Volterra;—or rather to the bottom of the hill on which that city stands. For ridiculously disproportioned as were the conditions of a struggle between Florence and the ancient Etruscan city, the position of the latter was such as to make its immediate reduction a matter of no small difficulty. The

Florentine commissioners felt it to be so much so, that A.D. 1429. they sent a message to Niccolò Fortebraccio, a nephew of the great general Braccio of Perugia, who had fought in the Florentine service in the Milanese war, and who, when that was over, had retired to Fucecchio, a little town in the lower Valdarno, to beg him to come and give them the benefit of his military experience.

Fortebraccio came at the call of his old employers, and would no doubt soon have found the means of taking the proud and courageous little city, whose gigantic old walls frowned grimly so high above him and his troops on the brow of their almost precipitous volcanic hill. But the instability of the mushroom-grown power established by poor Messer Giusto did not await his attack. The Volterran nobles;—(for there also the collision of the two hostile social systems, the feudal and the municipal, had created and bequeathed the misfortune of two opposed castes;)—the nobles, who did not see any advantage in incurring all the evils involved in a siege of their city by a far superior force, for the sake of raising one of the popular caste to be lord over them, conspired against the artisan *Signore;* obtained access to him in the fortress under the pretence of counselling him respecting the resistance to be made to the enemy; and then, being three to one, fell on him with their swords, and slew him,—not before two of their number had been badly wounded by his courageous resistance. Then the counter-revolution was effected as quickly and easily as the revolution had been. The dead body of the demagogue was thrown from the windows of the fortress into the piazza of the city; a cry of "*Viva il buono Stato della città di Volterra! i buoni cittadini! e l' amicizia col Comune di Firenze!*" was raised; the special partisans of Giusto ran away and hid themselves, and the counter-revolution was completed. "*Il buono stato della Città di Volterra! I buoni cittadini!*" No

A.D. 1429. mention is made, it is to be observed, of nobles, save under the euphuism of *i buoni cittadini!*

Messengers were sent down the hill to the Florentine camp, inviting the Commissaries to enter the city. They did so, and were received with all demonstrations of welcome and rejoicing. But when, after the huzzahs had been shouted, and the *Te Deums* sung, and the banquets eaten, the Volterran magistrates began to speak respecting the terms of the arrangements to be made for the future connection of the city with suzerain Florence, the two Commissaries somewhat curtly and ominously said that all these matters must be left to the War Board at Florence. Their commission extended no further than to the reduction of the rebellious city to obedience. They had happily accomplished this; and there their task ended!

In the council-chamber of the Palazzo in Florence there was much debating on the lot to be awarded to the repentant city. But it was remembered that this was the third time that Volterra had been reduced to obedience by the Florentine arms; and the voices of those of the Signory, who were in favour of severity, prevailed. The people of Volterra were sentenced to lose the power of naming their own Podestà, and were obediently to receive one sent to them by Florence. The command of their fortresses was taken out of their own hands; and as for the regulations of the new *Catasta* which had aggrieved them, and caused their rebellion, those were to be accepted and submitted to in every particular, as a matter of course.*

It is to be observed that throughout this dispute with Volterra it was the aristocratic party which specially insisted that the Communes, which, like Volterra, were connected with Florence by a tie of a nature ever oscillating between alliance and subjection, should be subjected to the

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. i. p. 253; Ammirato, lib. xix. Gonf. 830—1.

new Catasta; while it was popularity-hunting Cosmo, who put himself forward as the friend, protector, and advocate of the provincials. He maintains their non-liability to the tax; he visits in prison daily, and supports there at his own expense, the envoys from Volterra, when they were imprisoned by the Florentines; and he uses his influence effectually to mitigate the severity of the terms decided on with regard to their destiny.* A.D. 1429.

And so ended the rebellion, and the last shreds of independence of Volterra.

But even for such a well-defined and so easily-accomplished an object as the reduction of Volterra, the employment of such an agent as Fortebraccio was, as ever, not free from danger. And especially there was danger in the relations of the Commonwealth with such a man, when these had to be conducted by a hot-headed and ambitious partisan chieftain like Rinaldo degli Albizzi. It was in the talk between these two, in their tents under Volterra, that a scheme was concocted, which once again threw the already exhausted Commonwealth into a costly and disastrous war.†

The professional soldier of fortune, anxious of course to find or make employment for himself and his men, and Messer Rinaldo degli Albizzi, seeing in the conduct of a war that should win an important addition to the Florentine territory, a means of strengthening his position as a party chieftain in Florence, agreed that all these advantages might be obtained by an attack on Lucca. It has been mentioned that Messer Paolo Guinigi, the present lord or "tyrant" of Lucca, was already in bad odour with the

* See an interesting Volterran chronicle printed in the third volume of the Appendix to the "Archivio Storico Italiano," pp. 318, *et seq.*, and the useful and excellent elucidation of that very accomplished historical antiquary Signore Marco Tabarrini.

† Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. i. p. 255.

A.D. 1430. Florentines. And it was agreed between the Albizzi and Fortebraccio, that the latter should attack the Lucchese territory; the Florentine oligarch assuring him that he had sufficient authority in the city to induce the Florentines to declare war, and to entrust the conduct of it to him, Fortebraccio.

Messer Paolo at Lucca heard enough of what was in the wind to know that he was in danger, and to be considerably uneasy, and—as the Florentine historians somewhat amusingly phrase it,—"tormented by remorse of conscience!" * It is true, that he was conscious, not only of having given offence to Florence in the manner that has been mentioned, but also of being, and having for a long time been a debtor of certain moneys to the Commonwealth, which ought to have been long since paid. So he sent an envoy to the Signory, begging for the friendship of the Commonwealth, and saying that he was prepared to pay what was due. In reply he was told, very grimly, to pay his debts first, and talk about friendship afterwards. He did this accordingly; begging also the Florentines not to permit their general Fortebraccio to ravage and ruin his country;—for by that time the Free-lance Captain had made a swoop on the fertile plains around Lucca, and had "in the twinkling of an eye," as the historians express it, done immense mischief. He was now told that Fortebraccio was not in the pay of the Commonwealth;—that in attacking the Lucchese territory he had in no wise acted in accordance with any orders from Florence;—they, the Florentine Signory, had no authority whatever over his conduct;—but they would request him to discontinue his incursions;—the latter concession having been made because it was not yet decided in Florence whether war should be declared against Lucca or not.

* Ammirato, lib. xix. Gonf. 831.

For it did not appear, when the matter came to be canvassed in Florence, to be quite so certain a thing as Rinaldo had imagined, that the city would plunge into a war with Lucca. Old Niccolò da Uzzano, Rinaldo's fellow-aristocrat, his father's friend, and the oldest leader of the party, was strongly against it. And of course a large portion of the oligarchical faction followed the lead of one, whose age, experience, and long position at the head of the party, entitled him to so much respect. The grounds of his opinion urged in debate, are given in detail by the chroniclers of the time; but the only point, which, as containing anything more characteristic than the ordinary maxims of common prudence, is worth noting in them, is his strongly urged objection to make an unjust war against a community which had always been of sound Guelph principles. The remnant of old political principles thus rapidly passing away in Florence, and of maxims belonging to a past state of things, is to be traced in the old man's feelings on the subject. To the young man the old-established Guelphism of Lucca went for very little. A.D. 1431

But Rinaldo would hardly have carried his point without assistance from a quarter, whence we should never have anticipated that it could come to him. Cosmo de' Medici and the populace were in favour of the war!—Cosmo, the inheritor of his father's position at the head of the popular party,—of that father who had so perseveringly opposed by his counsels the late war, and that populace which had so bitterly complained of the burthens entailed by it, and so loudly inveighed against the selfishness of the aristocratic party in the prosecution of it!

"And truly," writes Macchiavelli, "it seems incredible that such different opinions on the subject of carrying on a war should have existed in the same city. For those citizens and that populace, who after ten years of peace had blamed the war against Filippo Visconti, undertaken

A.D. 1430. for the defence of their own liberty, now after so great an expenditure, and so much suffering, urgently demanded the waging of war against Lucca for the oppression of the liberty of others. And on the other hand those who were anxious for the former war opposed the latter. So widely do opinions vary with the change of time. So much more eager is the multitude to seize that which belongs to another, than to preserve its own. And so much more are the generality of men moved by the hope of gaining than by the fear of losing. And the reason of this is, that the danger of the latter is not believed unless when it is close at hand; the former is hoped even when it is at a distance."

Such are the considerations, by which that famous master of the science of human motives, Macchiavelli, seeks to explain the notable inconsistency of the Florentine populace in anxiously desiring an unjust war of conquest at a time when the finances of the Commonwealth were far from being in an encouraging condition, whereas they had a few years before bitterly complained of their rulers for waging a war most necessary for the security of Florentine independence, at a time when the exchequer was far more able to bear the cost. But he leaves unnoticed two considerations, which had, in all probability, at least as large a share in producing that remarkable change in the popular feeling. In the first place he neglects to estimate the powerful influence exercised over the minds of men by local distance. The Florentine citizens did not see, and had never seen, Milan or the Milanese, or the Duke of Milan, and were not therefore animated by that feeling of personal hatred and enmity against them, which roused their passions against a neighbouring and rival Commonwealth.[1] This sentiment, which plays so large a part in all mediæval Italian history, existed with an intensity to which it is difficult to find any parallel

in the feelings and conduct of any people with which English readers are more intimately acquainted. But it is not difficult to understand that large masses of men might be found among ourselves, who would be anxious to rush into a fight for the putting down of an Irish rebellion, who yet might disapprove of a war with Russia for the protection of Constantinople from her invading armies. Many men would not understand, or would not admit, the probabilities of future contingencies menacing to English independence from the Russian aggression in question; just as many Florentines did not realize to themselves the menace to Florentine liberty, which the statesmen of the Commonwealth saw in Filippo Visconti's aggression on Forli. But hateful Lucca was there close at hand, almost within sight of the hills above Florence! The disgusting, proud, stuck-up little city, with its detestable, impracticable stiff-necked inhabitants, who would not admit the superiority of the great Commonwealth on the Arno, and of whom every man in Florence had some story to tell, clearly proving, what odious and contemptible beasts these Lucchesi must be. A charming, beautiful little city is Lucca, inhabited by very worthy people quite as good, at least, as their neighbours;—an excellent, well-meaning, and specially industrious race of citizens. But to every born citizen of any one of the mediæval Italian communities, the inhabitants of other, and especially of the neighbouring cities, were always hateful, bad, and by the necessity of their nature abominably wicked! * A.D. 1430

This was the feeling which doubtless was at work to

* Even at the present day, the writer of these pages has in the remoter part of the hills behind Lucca been seriously warned by the people of one little hamlet to avoid passing through another such, visible on the neighbouring hill-side, on the ground of the thorough badness of the people of the latter—a warning which would have been equally given in just the contrary sense, if the writer had chanced to pass first among the dwellings of the calumniated community.

A.D. 1430. make a war against Lucca popular with the Florentine masses.

To which it may be added, in the second place, that Macchiavelli takes no notice of the influence of Cosmo de' Medici. His father had been averse to the war with Milan, and had used his great influence with the people to make that war unpopular. The influence of Cosmo now, after the affair of the "*Catasta*," which had so endeared his father to the people, after the embellishment of Florence by one of its finest churches at the sole cost of the Medicean coffers, was at least as great as that of his father had ever been. And Cosmo was, as has been said, strongly in favour of the war.

In all probability the opinion on this subject held by the rising young popular leader was, as is generally the fact in similar cases, but the reflection of the sentiment which he contributed to foster. The influence of the people and of the people's guide was doubtless reciprocal, and acted and reacted on each other. And it may well be believed that the popular feeling on the subject ran so strongly in the streets and "Loggie" of Florence, that it would not have suited the views of Cosmo to oppose it;—of that Cosmo, of whom Macchiavelli says,* that he at this time took a greater interest in public affairs than his father had done,—that he had greater influence with his friends,—that he was excessively prudent, and made himself beloved by everybody. In fact, Cosmo was exactly then beginning visibly and avowedly to raise that vast fabric of political and social power for which his father had less visibly and less avowedly laid the wide and solid foundation. A Medicean party was in the act of consolidating itself, and the fact of its existence was becoming familiar to the ears and minds of the citizens. And all the vast consequences

* Ed. cit. vol. i. p. 269.

which followed from these beginnings might have been lost to Medicean ambition, and avoided (at least in that shape) by doomed Florence, if the candidate for the popular favour had joined the old aristocrat tory statesman, Niccolò da Uzzano, in striving to curb the popular violence, and baulk the multitude of an object on which their most favourite passions were bent. A.D. 1430.

Various circumstances also were occurring from day to day in Florence to stir up these passions to the utmost. Niccolò Fortebraccio boasted loudly that he should have little difficulty in laying the keys of Lucca at the feet of the Signory. The enterprise, he declared, was a safe and easy one, and would not fail of success. He affirmed that he had already secured the connivance of parties within the city, who had undertaken to betray one of the gates into his hands, and urged the Florentines not to lose so promising an opportunity. The "Vicars" who held governments on behalf of Florence in the districts adjacent to the Lucchese territory—especially Andrea Giugni, Vicar of the Val di Nievole, and Domenico Buoninsegni, Vicar of Vico—kept writing again and again to the Signory assuring them that the neighbouring towns and fortresses of the Lucchese were all disaffected towards the Lord of Lucca, and were only waiting to give themselves up to the Florentines, till they knew that they should be accepted. Even Jacopo Viviani, the very ambassador whom Messer Paolo Guinigi, the tyrant of Lucca, had sent to Florence to beg for the friendship of the Commonwealth, turned traitor to his master, and in secret encouraged the Florentines to undertake the conquest of his native city, assuring them that Lucca was ripe for revolt against him!

This treacherous envoy had been imprisoned by the Lord of Lucca for conspiring against him, and, though proved to have been guilty, had been pardoned by him. The sovereign, who had thus given him his life, imagined

A.D. 1430. that his clemency had made the pardoned man his fast and firm friend. But he "remembering," as Macchiavelli says,* with one of those sneers of his which condemn the object of them to an immortality of infamy, "the danger he had run, more than the kindness he had received," used every endeavour to compass the ruin of the man who trusted him.

All these exciting circumstances raised the greed and the hatred of the Florentines to such a degree that the very children in the streets were crying out for war against Lucca.† And it was in this state of the public mind that the Signory summoned all the councils—that of the "*Popolo*," that of the "*Comune*," and that of the "Two Hundred,"—on the 4th of December, 1430,‡ to take their votes on the question of war with Lucca. Four hundred and forty-nine citizens assembled in the great hall of the Palazzo Pubblico upon this occasion; and the votes were given by 350 black beans and 99 white ones.§ In Florentine voting, it must be remembered that the black beans —("*fava*," whence "*faveo*" and our term "favour")— gave assent, and white beans dissent. So the war with Lucca was carried by an immense majority.

The principal speakers in the debate which preceded this vote were Niccolò da Uzzano in opposition to, and Rinaldo degli Albizzi in favour of the war. The major part of the arguments used on either side were of such a nature as readily to suggest themselves to the mind of the reader. But the question of the justice of the proposed war was treated in a manner which throws so much light on the notions and principles of public law prevailing at that time in Italy, that it is worth while to notice them as briefly as may be.

Messer Niccolò, in opposing the war, had, though by no

* Ed. cit. vol. i. p. 256.
† Ammirato, lib. xix. Gonf. 831.
‡ Florentine style.
§ Cambi, ed. cit. vol. xx. p. 179.

means, mainly resting his case upon that argument, maintained that it was an "unjust" war, because Messer Paolo Guinigi, Lord of Lucca, had, when the conditions of peace were established at the close of the late war between Florence and the Duke of Milan, been named among the adherents of Florence, between whom and the Duke of Milan and his adherents there was to be peace. To this Messer Rinaldo degli Albizzi replied that any such argument involved a complete misconception of the nature of the position made for the sovereigns and states named by similar treaties as "adherents" of either of the principal parties. No obligation whatever, he argued, was imposed by any such treaty on either party as regarded those named as their own adherents. The opposite party was indeed bound to keep the peace towards them. But as between the principal party to the treaty and his own adherents, or as between any one of such adherents and another of the same side, no obligation was created. And for no other reason than this, continued the orator, did the Florentine government refuse to permit Lucca and its lord to be named in the treaty in question as adherents of the Duke of Milan, as that sovereign had wished; and insisted, on the contrary, that that city and its ruler should be numbered among our adherents; precisely because we would not leave to the Visconti the right of making war at his pleasure in Tuscany, and because we would not consent to tie our own hands with regard to Lucca. A.D. 1430

And it appears to have been admitted that the doctrine of the younger statesman was the correct one.

So with the beginning of the new year the usual preparations for war were made. A Board of Ten was named; Rinaldo degli Albizzi and Astorre Gianni were appointed commissaries for the conduct of the war in the field; and Niccolò Fortebraccio was formally engaged as General of the Florentine forces.

A.D. 1430. The war began disastrously from the commencement; and that not so much in consequence of any military misfortune or miscarriage, as from the consequences of the bitter party feeling within the city, and, in some degree at all events, of the opening for hostile criticism afforded by the faults and imprudence of the commissaries, whom all that party which had fruitlessly opposed the war was of course burning to ruin and disgrace.*

It was not difficult for the Florentine forces to overrun the territory of the weaker city, and to seize on many villages, towns, and fortresses, and make large booty. It was the tempting facility, indeed, of this latter mode of making war that provoked the watchful jealousy of the citizens at home, and served as the most available arm against the two Commissaries.

Of these Gianni was undoubtedly guilty of the unpardonable atrocities of which he was accused. That portion of the Florentine army which was under his command had occupied the country to the north of Lucca, in the direction of the little town of Pietra Santa. There is a fine and fertile valley which opens into the plain from out of the Apennines a little beyond Pietra Santa, called from the name of its principal village the Valley of Serravezza,—the same which has become well known in recent years by the statuary marble, vieing with that of Carrara in excellence, with which the neighbouring mountains abound. Messer Commissary Gianni marched his men to the mouth of this rich and populous valley, and was there met by a deputation of the inhabitants, who declared it to be their wish to submit themselves to the Florentines, and live as faithful subjects of the Commonwealth. Thereupon the Florentine commissioner, affecting to accept their offers, assembled all the men of the valley in one of the churches,

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. i. p. 250; Ammirato, lib. xix. Gonf. 831.

as if for the purpose of haranguing them; and then, having made them prisoners, gave up their homes to be sacked by his soldiers. It is not recorded that blood was shed, for there was no possibility of resistance. But every outrage that could be committed, short of murder, on the persons, property, and families of the unhappy inhabitants was perpetrated. A few of them who escaped from the hands of the invaders made their way to Florence, and were admitted to the presence of the Signory to tell their wrongs. And the impression produced by the recital of them, aided no doubt by the enmity of one portion of the citizens against the Commissary, was a very strong and a very painful one in Florence. Messer Astorre Gianni was at once recalled, and condemned to "admonition," carrying with it all the disabilities involved in that sentence,—which we here find, it may be observed, awarded as a punishment for misconduct having no reference whatever to the evil-doing which that form of penalty was originally intended to repress. The Commissary, who had thus infamously abused his power and disgraced the Florentine name, was in no wise on that account chargeable with "Ghibellinism." * A.D. 1430.

The charges preferred against Messer Rinaldo degli Albizzi were of a somewhat similar though much less grave description. The portion of the army under his orders, and those of his friend Niccolò Fortebraccio, was operating on the Pescia, or Val di Nievole side of Lucca, and had rapidly overrun the Lucchese territory in that direction. But the citizens, who were eagerly watching the course of the war at home in Florence, and especially that faction of them who were opposed to the war, complained loudly that nothing was done towards taking or even attacking Lucca itself. Messer Rinaldo had seemed to forget, it was said, all his former eagerness on that

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. i. p. 260; Ammirato, lib. xix. Conf. 831.

A.D. 1430. subject. Enormous quantities of booty had been made, and vast herds of cattle driven off to the broad Albizzi lands. Was there not room indeed to suppose that *that* in truth was in Messer Rinaldo's eyes the main and real object of the war? There were stories, too, current in Florence of the establishment of a regular system of traffic between the Commissary and the troops under his command, by means of which the latter found a convenient ready-money market for anything of value that they could lay their hands on, and the former found an opportunity of very largely increasing the Albizzi wealth by dealings under circumstances very specially favourable to the purchaser. The military quarters of the noble Florentine Commissary had assumed, it was declared, a very unseemly resemblance to a huckster's shop.

The proud Albizzi did not wait to be recalled; but on hearing of the prevalence of these accusations, hurried to Florence, and rushing indignantly into the presence of the Signory, threw up his appointment amid a storm of vituperative eloquence on the ingratitude of the multitude, with much more to the same effect. Had he quietly shown the incorrectness of the charges made against him, and then returned to his post, it would have seemed, at least to after times, more probable that the accusations were mere calumny.*

Thus the Florentine expedition against Lucca was deprived of its leaders; the army was without commanders, except as it was under the merely military orders of the hired captain, Fortebraccio; and it became necessary for the "War Ten" to name new Commissaries. Early in the year,—1430—Messer Neri Capponi and Alamanno Salviati were sent to the camp in that capacity. It is strange to find such men, who must all their lives have

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. i. p. 263.

been more versed in handling the ledger than the sword, undertaking to decide for themselves the difficult points of military tactics, when the Commonwealth had hired for the express purpose a professional captain, who had the reputation of being one of the best soldiers of his time. But the same phenomenon presents itself again and again in the course of the history of the wars waged by the mercantile community on the banks of the Arno. It never seems to have occurred to any one of these bankers and merchants, sent on a sudden need from their counting-houses to assume the command of armies, that any special knowledge of the business in hand other than that to be obtained from "the light of nature," as the phrase goes, was requisite for the purpose. And more absurdly still, a knot of other bankers and merchants, sitting at home in Florence, who had not even the advantage of such "light of nature," as could be obtained from a sight of the localities to be operated on, constantly undertake to overrule the views of the men who had been specially sent to the scene of action. A.D. 1430

Thus on the present occasion, the two new Commissaries consulted together, and came to the decision that it was useless to attempt a direct attack on the city of Lucca; but that if they could make themselves masters of the districts from which the city drew its supplies,—especially of Camajore and Pietra Santa,—the city itself must at no very distant day fall into their hands. The reduction of those two places they judged to be easily attainable if the whole of the forces at their disposition were employed on that object. On this plan therefore the Commissaries proposed to act. But "the Ten" at home would hear of no such dilatory tactics; and insisted that the army should lay close siege to Lucca. The Ten, though it frequently happened that the term of their office was renewed, were appointed for a period of six months only. And it is

A.D. 1430. impossible to avoid the suspicion that the probability of the near expiration of the time of their authority may have influenced the Board to insist on a course of action, from which it might be hoped that a brilliant termination of the war might be reached in their time.

The army did accordingly beleaguer Lucca, lying close around the walls of it, in those winter months, in the damp watermeads that now supply the city with forage and garden produce,—four or five crops in the year. But the city was none the nearer being taken for that.

Then "a famous architect, who lived in Florence in those days, and who has filled our city with his works,"* Messer Filippo Brunellesco, laid before the Ten a plan for drowning Lucca, by diverting into the low grounds around it, the waters of the river Serchio. And with such vehement eloquence did he recommend this scheme, that the Board gave orders for the execution of it. And canals were dug, and dams made;—with the result of very nearly drowning the Florentine camp, which was obliged to withdraw itself from the walls. But Serchio, headlong and unruly stream as he is, would not drown his own mistress city; and Lucca was still none the nearer to being taken. "It was a childish scheme," says a contemporary chronicler,† "time and labour and money, as much perhaps as forty thousand florins, were all thrown away; and nothing was gained save disgrace and loss."

And a gibing song was made to taunt Ser Brunellesco with the notable failure of his scheme, and all the little boys were singing it in the streets of Florence, "which very bitterly stabbed the heart of Filippo!" ‡

Upon these failures the Commissaries were once more recalled, and Giovanni Guicciardini and Dino Gucci were

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. i. p. 265.

† Ricasoli di Giovanni Morelli, Deliz. degli Erud. Tosc. vol. xix. p. 87.

‡ Ammirato, lib. xx. Gonf. 834.

sent to replace them; but the change did not cause any improvement in the situation; and the war still lingered without any important result, save notable mischief to the Florentine finances. A good deal of epidemic disease,—pestilence the historians call it as usual,—appeared also in the city, as the summer months came on, and added much to the general distress and uneasiness. So general was this distress, and so sharply was the scarcity of money felt, that, as a measure of relief, the Signory authorised the residence of Jews in Florence, who were permitted to lend money at usury, not exceeding four *denari* on each *lira* per month. The *Lira* consists of twenty *Soldi*, and the *Soldo* of twelve *Denari;* (from which names come our world-famous £ *s. d.*) so that the interest legalized on the above terms amounts to twenty per cent. per annum. And when these conditions are taken into consideration, the statement made at the time when the Jews were expelled from Florence in 1495, after exercising this usury for sixty-five years, to the effect that they had in this period gained the sum of very nearly fifty millions of florins, seems less extraordinary than it otherwise might; and is noticeable mainly as an indication of the exceedingly high value of money in Florence, and consequently of the largeness of the profits made by the commerce which could afford to pay such interest. A.D. 1430.

The war lingered; but there were menacing symptoms of a probability that it might soon cease to be "localized" within its present limits, and become as general in Italy as that from which the peninsula had so recently escaped.

Messer Paolo Guinigi determined at length on sending to beg assistance from the Duke of Milan. It was an exceedingly dangerous step to take,—a calling in of the vulture to take part in the quarrels of the poultry yard, which was well nigh certain to be fatal to at least the weaker party.

A.D. 1430. The Visconti, however at first was, or affected to be, unwilling to take any part in the matter. He was bound by treaty, he said, not to meddle with the affairs of any country to the south of the Magra. But the ambassadors of the Lord of Lucca represented to him, that their master, if not assisted by him, would be driven to give himself up to the Florentines; that they having thus become masters of Lucca, would be so powerful that Genoa would no longer be safe from them. Influenced, or pretending to be influenced by these arguments, Filippo Visconti sent Niccolo Piccinino with a strong force to occupy a position at the outskirts of the hill country to the north of Lucca; and instructed his other general, Francesco Sforza, to demand permission of him to go to the assistance of Lucca, as on his own account, and with the excuse that the term of his engagement with the Duke had come to a conclusion.

The immediate result of Sforza's presence was to constrain the Florentines to raise the siege. The next news that reached Florence, almost on the back of the first, was that the great general had taken sundry places in the neighbourhood of Pescia almost without a blow;—and that there was much reason to fear for that city itself. Thereupon, "the Florentines,"—it is Macchiavelli, a Florentine of the Florentines, if ever there was one, who speaks,—"seeing these disasters, had recourse to those remedies, which had so often saved them, knowing well, that in the case of mercenary soldiers, where force in sufficient quantity is wanting, corruption will attain the end in view. So they offered the Count money, as the price not only of his departure, but of his giving Lucca into their hands. The Count, perceiving that there was no possibility of drawing any more money from Lucca, willingly turned to draw it from those who had it to pay." *

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. i. p. 266.

A bargain therefore was struck, according to which Sforza for the sum of fifty thousand ducats, agreed to take himself off; and not to give up Lucca into their hands;—for that seemed to him too bare-faced a treason;—but to induce the Lucchese to rise in revolt against their sovereign. A.D. 1430.

The Count Francesco Sforza received his money, and performed his part of the contract. He took himself and his troops off; and the people of Lucca did rise in revolt against their tyrant,* Messer Paolo Guinigi. The revolution in Lucca was brought about in a very simple and easy fashion. One Antonio Petrucci, who resided at the court of the Lucchese tyrant, as representative of the Republic of Siena, having conceived some enmity against him, and being anxious on behalf of his own Community to prevent any design which Guinigi might have, of delivering up the city to the Florentines, was the principal mover in the plot. His intimacy with the tyrant gave him easy access at all times to the palace; and he availed himself of this privilege to introduce with him two conspirators, leading men in Lucca, Pietro Cennami, and Giovanni de Chivizzano, together with forty men into the palace in the night-time. The tyrant wakened from his sleep, demanded in alarm the

* It may be mentioned, in case the reader should not be already aware of the fact, that in speaking of the more or less despotic rulers of the cities of mediæval Italy, in the language of their own time and country, the word "tyrant" is not to be understood as necessarily involving the ideas which we attach to it. Tyranny meant merely that "*governo di un solo*," which the Florentines, and the people of the other free cities in a less violent degree, especially objected to. The tyrant of a city was simply equivalent to the monarch of it. Paolo Guinigi would, while doubtless maintaining that his government was all that a people could desire, have called himself the "tyrant" of Lucca. The use of the word implied a certain amount of disapprobation, and of imputation of wrong doing in the mouths of those who thought that a democratic form of government was the *beau ideal*, which every community should aim at, and was entitled to; and that the possession of monarchical power necessarily implied the wrong doing of usurpation.

A.D. 1430. cause of such a visit. To which Cennami replied that Lucca was not disposed to suffer any longer the evils of a state of siege on his account. "You have ruled over us," he said, "for thirty years; and in all this time you have done nothing but fill your coffers with our money. And the citizens are now minded to see whether they can do better under a free government. So we are here in order that you may give up to us the keys of the city and the moneys that belong to it."

In affairs of this kind the surest and readiest means of securing the adherence of the citizens to the cause of revolution, was the exhibition of the dead body of the deposed tyrant on the principal piazza of the city,—thrown probably from the palace window, as that of Messer Giusto Landini had been the other day at Volterra. The mode of proceeding was a common and well-known one. So that Messer Paolo Guinigi, as soon as he was sufficiently wakened to comprehend fully the address presented to him at his bedside, and to appreciate duly the nature of the situation, knew that the moment was a very unpleasantly critical one. He replied therefore that the city, as well as he himself, was in their power; and that all he asked was, that as his rule of Lucca had commenced, so it might finish without bloodshed. As for the money, he showed his empty coffers, and assured them that the funds had all been spent in the course of the present war.

So as there really was little or no danger of any opposition to the accomplished revolution in the town, they spared Guinigi's life; and after some consultation, determined on sending him and his children prisoners to Milan; where, say the historians,* they shortly died miserably in the Visconti prisons.†

* "They" died, say the historians;—that is, the father and his sons, which would seem to imply that the deaths could hardly have been in the course of nature.

† Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. i. p. 267; Ammirato, lib. xx. Gonf. 836.

This revolution was accomplished in Lucca on the 15th of August, 1430. A.D. 1430.

The citizens of Lucca, having thus become their own masters, lost no time in sending ambassadors to Florence, begging that the Florentines would withdraw their army and make peace, now that the tyrant, with whom in fact and not with the citizens they were at war, had been removed. They wished nothing else, they protested, than to live in friendship and league with the Florentines, and were perfectly ready to follow in all respects the fortunes of their Commonwealth. This, it will be easily understood, was not what the Florentines wanted; and yet it was somewhat difficult to reject overtures so entirely reasonable and friendly. Diplomacy however, and especially Florentine diplomacy, would indeed be unworthy of its reputation if it had no resources for overcoming such an obstacle as this. It was replied to the Lucchese that Florence would have been perfectly willing to make peace with them, and leave them their liberty, if it were possible to do so without detriment to their own Republic. But the Lucchese had been free before now; and had not shown themselves capable of preserving their liberty, but had always, on the contrary, fallen under the power of some tyrant or other, which had proved the source of various troubles and inconveniences to Florence. If the Florentines could be assured that this would not happen again, they were perfectly ready to make peace.

But for fear the Lucchese should importunately set about giving them the assurance they thus professed to require, orders were sent by the Signory to the army before Lucca, that if the ambassadors should wish to return again to Florence, they were to be told that there was no use in their doing so; and they were not to be allowed to pass; inasmuch as the Florentines could not treat with them as with a free people, seeing that the

A.D. 1130. Duke of Milan was in possession of sundry of their fortresses.

In the meantime the Florentines had engaged Guido Antonio de Montefeltro, Count of Urbino, as general of their forces, "for the sake of appearances," * and also Guido Antonio Manfredi, Lord of Faenza, with four hundred lances, and two hundred foot-soldiers, "and any greater number which he might find necessary, for the prosecution of the war." The Duke of Milan on the other hand sent Piccinino to the assistance of the Lucchese. He still however wished, if possible, to avoid acting in open and avowed defiance of the treaty which bound him not to interfere with the affairs of central Italy; and therefore pretended that Piccinino was no longer in his service, but was sent by the Genoese in consequence of an alliance between them and Lucca. As if, says the Florentine historian, it were not perfectly well known that Genoa, though not nominally a part of the Visconti dominions, was yet so entirely in the Duke's power, that it was altogether ridiculous to talk of that city forming alliances, and making war, as if it had been an independent community.

So the war was continued throughout the year 1430 more vigorously than ever.

When the Conte di Urbino, a commander of much reputation, joined the Florentine army in the fall of the year, he found an attack by the forces under Piccinino imminent. Taking into consideration the position of the two armies, and all the circumstances of the case, he formed his opinion, and sent letters to the Signory to lay before them his plans for the campaign. But as usual, and as if by a fatality which forbad the Florentines from learning anything from the dearly-purchased experience of past disasters, the bankers and merchants, who sat in

* "Per maggior riputazione."—Ammirato, *loc. cit.*

Florence as the "Ten of War," once again thought proper to disapprove of their General's tactics, and to dictate their own plan for the conduct of the campaign. It would seem as if indeed the Florentines hired their generals merely for appearance sake. Two new Commissaries, Alessandro degli Alessandri and Neri Capponi, were sent to the camp with orders, it is true, not to interfere so entirely with the discretion of the general as had been hitherto done. They were to "take care to keep the army out of danger, not caring for delay, if only the enterprise could be persevered in without risking the loss of the army." It is easy to see that these were instructions framed by a war government, hardly pressed by a peace faction in the community. "At all events keep the field, but do not risk any such disaster as should give the opposition a ground of outcry against us." It is equally easy to perceive that such an amount of interference with the discretion and authority of a commander-in-chief must have been abundantly sufficient to paralyse all his powers and efforts, and to ensure misfortune in the field. And the result was exactly what might have been anticipated—more especially as disaster had been still further ensured to the Florentine camp by an absence of cordial feeling and a jealousy between the generals Niccolò Fortebraccio and the Count of Urbino;—a state of things which the engagement of the latter general "for the sake of appearances" might have been with the most perfect certainty expected to create. Niccolò Fortebraccio, whose reputation as a soldier was at the very least equal to that of the Count of Urbino, and who had been entrusted with the conduct of the war from the beginning, could hardly be expected to submit with a good grace to the secondary position which the higher rank of the Count of Urbino made it necessary for him to occupy after the appointment of the latter.

A.D. 1430.

A.D. 1430. The two new Commissaries reached the camp on the 1st of December, and they and the General-in-Chief spent the greater part of that night in consultation. And a plan was at length decided on, to be put in execution the following morning, the success or failure of which depended mainly on the possibility of passing the Serchio, which was running between the two armies, and on the question which of the two should be the first to pass it. In the morning the river was too high for either army to attempt to cross it. Fortebraccio, who had had no share in the over-night consultation, and who disapproved the position into which the Florentine troops had been led, pointed out to the Commissaries in the course of that morning the danger in which the army was; declaring that, if the enemy should succeed in passing the river, the Florentine force must infallibly be defeated; and when the alarmed Commissaries asked what remedy he could recommend, grimly and shortly answered, "Hard fighting!"

The previsions of Fortebraccio were justified, and it must be supposed that his "remedy" was not resorted to with sufficient energy. For Piccinino, by a movement which was considered an exceedingly bold one, crossed the Serchio two hours after sunset, by which time the waters had in some degree fallen, and inflicted a most complete and disastrous rout on the Florentine army. More than fifteen hundred horsemen of the flower of the army were made prisoners, and the rest, together with the General and the Commissaries, escaped with difficulty, some to Ripafratta and some to Pisa. It was thought that if the enemy had followed up their success at once, he might easily have made himself master of Pisa. But Piccinino preferred seizing on the fortresses around Lucca; and the opinion at Florence was that such a general would not have allowed such a chance to escape him, had it not been that his master the Duke of Milan feared that such a step

would prematurely call the attention of Italy to the ambitious designs, the realization of which he was now once again beginning to hope for. A.D. 1431

The news of this defeat caused great consternation and dismay in Florence. The loss of war material was a very serious one; the loss of reputation was worse; the danger to Pisa was a very grave and distressing matter of consideration; and worse perhaps than all, at least to the government and the war party, was the damaging weapon put by this defeat into the hands of the opposition.

"But inasmuch as lamentations are of no avail in such cases, and as it was no longer possible for the Commonwealth to withdraw from the war, dispatches were sent to the General and the Commissaries, exhorting them to exert themselves to the utmost for the reorganization of the remains of the army, and to be on the alert to prevent the Republic from being exposed to any new misfortune."* The government at home at once—on the 8th of December, which must have been within five days after the news of the defeat reached Florence—had recourse to the same policy which it had successfully followed when the Commonwealth had previously been in danger from the Visconti. They sent off ambassadors to Venice, to carry the humiliating tidings of the great defeat, and to point out to the Venetian Senate that it was no longer a question of taking or not taking Lucca, but of the safety of the Republic. And the ambassadors were instructed to urge on the Venetians the necessity of their immediately declaring war in Lombardy. Of course it was understood very well by this time that it behoved Venice to bestir herself for the prevention of any serious danger to the Florentine Commonwealth at the hands of the Duke of Milan, not because of any special love which the Republic on the Adriatic

* Ammirato, *loc. cit.*

A.D. 1430. bore to her sister in the Valdarno, but because the destruction of the Florentine power meant the overrunning of Tuscany by the Visconti, who would thus have become more than sufficiently powerful to render his neighbourhood exceedingly dangerous to Venice herself. In fact, the whole system of the balance of power, and the maxims and motives and code of State policy springing out of that theory, were in full operation on a miniature scale in Italy at the epoch at which we have arrived. And it is very certain that without it the free states could not have kept their independence, nor could the peninsula have been prevented from falling under the dominion of some one or other of the ambitious and powerful sovereigns who so repeatedly made such a consummation the goal of their efforts and lives.

All this was at least quite as well understood by the sagacious statesmen of the Venetian Senate as by the more popularly constituted Florentine Signory. The patriotism of every one of the exceedingly numerous Communes which in those centuries divided the soil of Italy among them—of the greater among these as well as of the smaller—was of a very narrow description, and wholly municipal in its character;—in no wise *Italian*. Nor can the great Commonwealth of Florence be pointed out as an exception to this statement. Nevertheless, a general review of the history of Italy during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries will hardly fail to leave on an historical student's mind the impression, that in the conduct of the foreign policy adopted by the two great republican communities with a view to the maintenance of this necessary balance of power, that of Florence was on the whole more generous, and dictated by larger and nobler views, than that of Venice. The wisdom and sagacity of the governors of the latter State may have been more striking, and may have conduced with more uniform success to the

end in view, admitting that end to have been exclusively the greatness and prosperity of Venice. Mostly in the dealings between the two republics, which arose out of the necessity for allying themselves together against the dangerous power of some third State, Venice got the best of the bargain. Her government was the stronger, the more homogeneous, and worked to the end in view more smoothly and with fewer of those hitches and impediments which, arising out of dissensions, jealousies, and party strife at home, often hampered and rendered difficult, if not abortive, the negotiations of Florentine statesmen abroad. A.D 1431

And the results of this superior organization rarely failed to make themselves visible in the upshot of her treaties of alliance with the more democratic community. But the great cause of human liberty and progress—the continuity of which in its course across the centuries has to be traced not only (perhaps not mainly) in the outward and visible results of political institutions, but as frequently and as importantly in the inheritance of mind from mind, and the affiliation of aspiration—has owed more to Florence than to Venice. There was a wider scope in the theoretical creed, which made a part of the inheritance that every Florentine was born to; that creed, that freedom was the *summum bonum* of a policied community, the one great need, without which all else availed not to "save the city." The desire to impart to others the discovery of this great truth which they had made for themselves, and the determination to erect at all costs a bulwark which should defend not only themselves but the other free communities of central Italy from the encroachments of Lombard despotism, merit such a recognition. There was something analogous to the Englishman's love of constitutionalism, which he is so anxious to recommend to all the world in the fulness of his conviction of

A.D. 1431. the benefits he has himself received from it, in the Florentine love of democratic liberty;—a genuine persuasion that that which was good for them was good for others also, and a corresponding desire to impart it to them. And in all this, and in the results of the political systems of the two commercial republics,—results which caused the one city to resemble the liberal, open-hearted, and open-handed friendly man who comes to grief by putting his name to other people's bills; while the career of the other reminds us of the unbroken prosperity of the close-fisted man who thinks that charity begins at home,—it is Florence which has the larger and better claim to the kindly sympathies and admiration of the rest of the world, and of the centuries which have elapsed since the history of that political system was finally closed, as well as of those which will elapse ere it will be forgotten.

Venice on the present, as on other occasions, rightly understood what her own interests required her to do, and as soon as the winter months had passed away engaged once again the services of her former successful general Carmignuola, did as Florence had begged her, and made war on the Visconti in Lombardy.

In the meantime, on the 20th of February, 1431, Martin V., the Colonna Pope, died, "very opportunely for the Florentines," as the historian Ammirato says. For the old grudge against Florence on account of that contemptible offence of the unlucky street-doggerel, which valued his Holiness at the price of one farthing, and which was sufficient to cancel in his small and low mind all the most important and timely benefits he had received from the Commonwealth, was still rankling in his heart. A more contemptible example of littleness and unchristian malignity is not to be found even in the records of priestly hatred; but the light in which the sixteenth-century historian views the incident, and the tone in which he

moralizes it, are curious and instructive. The Pope, continues Ammirato, "not having been able in the course of eleven years to pay * off the offence received at Florence, would never have rested until he had found the means of showing the Florentines how dangerous a thing it is to sneer at great men. And in truth this sentiment of the Pontiff may be considered as most just, seeing that the dignity of his position and his exalted rank alone ought to be sufficient to defend him from every offence and contumely." † And therefore it was right that a sovereign, and that sovereign Christ's Vicar on earth, should make his entire state policy subservient to the undying desire of inflicting injury on a great community, which had given him the most loyal and absolutely indispensable support in his time of utmost need, in revenge for a silly rhyme on his name made and sung by the children in the streets! A.D. 1431.

On the eleventh day after his death Gabriello Condelmirio, a Venetian, called the Cardinal of Siena, who was at that time Legate at Ancona, was created Pope by the name of Eugenius IV.;—an election which was eminently pleasing to the Florentines, who had reason to believe that he was their friend. And in fact the new Pope commenced his reign by exerting himself to do that which was no less useful to Florence, than conformable to the theoretical duties of his own station. He laboured assiduously to secure peace in his time for Italy.

The new year, notwithstanding the piece of good fortune of the hostile Pope's death, opened very gloomily for the Florentines. There was pestilence in Florence, a thing that had hardly ever been known in winter. From eight to ten deaths occurred daily. Niccolò Piccinino was overrunning the northern part of Tuscany, and even pushing his operations as far southwards as Staggia, a stronghold,

* "*Smaltire*"—to digest, is the characteristic term of the original.

† Ammirato, lib. xx. Gonf. 838.

A.D. 1431. the picturesque ruins of which are still visible by the side of the railroad between Pozzibonzi and Siena. Every day news was arriving in Florence of some fresh disaster;—some other town, or castle, or district fallen into the hands of the enemy. False friends, and allies who had eagerly sought the protection and friendship of Florence in more prosperous times, were falling off from her on all sides. Siena, never a true-hearted or sincere ally of Florence, took the opportunity of avowing her enmity. The Lord of Piombino, he who in his infancy had been left to the guardianship of the Commonwealth by his father, and who owed everything to the Florentines, fancying that the wind of fortune was blowing steadily against the Republic, declared his adherence to the enemy, and caused many small places to throw off their allegiance to Florence. The Count Antonio da Pontedera also, who had turned traitor to Florence in the former war, was now actively taking advantage of the set of the tide against the Commonwealth to do all the mischief he could. "Very many places in the Maremma gave themselves to the enemy; and indeed it seemed as if there was no barrier to the irruption of Piccinino and of the Count Antonio of Pontedera, who both of them,—the one commanding a body of cavalry and the other a force of infantry,—made war not only as ordinary enemies, but with all the hatred of partisans; for both of them had been painted on the wall in the Piazza of Florence as traitors."*

Striving to make head against this tide of calamities, the War Ten, injudiciously enough, as it would seem, having learned nothing from the severe lesson so lately received on the banks of the Serchio, under the walls of Lucca, as to the danger of rival pretensions among their generals, engaged the services of Michele degli Attendoli da

* Ammirato, lib. xx. Gonf. 839.

Cutignola, a captain of high and rising reputation. But the mischief arising from this want of confidence in the general who had already served them well, if not successfully, showed itself this time in a different form. For Niccolò Fortebraccio, disgusted beyond endurance at having thus for the second time another general put over him, suddenly quitted the Florentine service, taking with him eight hundred horsemen of his own followers, and began making a predatory warfare in the upper valley of the Tiber on his own account. A.D. 1432.

In the meantime financial difficulties were making themselves felt in Florence, despite the action of the new law of the Catasta; and the Signory adopted a means of raising money, the mention of which is curious and noteworthy, as being the first beginning of a system which has subsequently developed itself into one of the most important features of the financial system of modern civilization. It is noticeable also, as proving the high credit enjoyed by the government of the Commonwealth, notwithstanding its reverses and difficulties. Foreigners to Florence were *permitted* to buy credits on the Florentine *Monte*, to the extent of a hundred thousand crowns, at five per cent.; in other and more familiar words, Florence created a five per cent. stock to the amount of 100,000 crowns, to be negotiated abroad. But the peculiarity is that the admission of foreigners as creditors of the State was manifestly considered as a valuable privilege granted to them, and one which they would willingly have availed themselves of to a greater amount, if the concession had not been limited to the sum named.

During the whole of the year 1432, the war continued partly in Lombardy, partly in Tuscany, and partly in the waters of Genoa, where more than one great naval contest took place between the fleets of the two great naval powers of the peninsula, the Genoese on behalf of their quasi-

A.D. 1432. sovereign the Duke of Milan, and the Venetians on behalf of the Florentine league. These naval fights, though conducted on a scale almost unprecedented in mediæval Italian history, and contested with an obstinacy and valour that attracted the attention of all contemporary Europe, could hardly be said to result in victory to either party, and were at all events ineffectual in contributing to bring the war to a conclusion. And they were in this respect typical of all the operations of the war. It was a war fruitful in nothing but suffering and destruction, and debt to all parties concerned in it, save, as usual in some degree, to the Venetians. Commenced by the Florentines most wrongfully and unjustifiably, it was continued by them justifiably and necessarily when the Duke of Milan became a party to it, and central Italy was once again threatened by his ambition. For the same reason the Venetians entered into the struggle justifiably; and they were alone in obtaining any advantage from it. The Florentines may be said indeed to have attained their object of once again barring the southward path against the encroachments of the Visconti ambition; but that success only left things as they were before the commencement of the war. Whatever the secret plans and hopes of Filippo Maria Visconti may have been, he was doing nothing for the realization of them when Florence began a war of aggression against Lucca. All the danger to which liberty and free institutions in Italy were once again exposed in this war, was the consequence of the greed for dominion, and hatred for the prosperity of a neighbouring republic, which had induced Florence to add this disastrous attempt to the long list of her disastrous attempts on the independence of Lucca.

At last, by the interposition of the good offices of the Pope and the same Cardinal of Santa Croce who had already more than once before been employed in similar negotiations, the parties to the war agreed to make peace,

and to leave the conditions of it to the arbitrament of the Marchese Niccolò d' Este and the Marchese Ludovico di Saluzzo. The terms arranged by them were agreed to on the 26th of April, 1433; and the principal of them consisted of a simple restitution of matters to the *status ante bellum*. All that the Florentines had lost in the Pisan and Lucchese districts was to be restored to them; and all that they had taken from Lucca was to be given up to that now free and independent city. Lucca had, it is true, been metamorphosed in the course of the strife from a "tyranny" into a free Republic; but this change was so easily and simply effected, that it is very evident that the citizens had only to will it at any time to ensure the successful issue of such a revolution. With regard to Siena a similar provision was made. Most of the independent feudal lords who had mingled in the fray were also to be placed in the same position they had previously held. The Marchese di Monferrato, the Spinetta Malaspini family in the Lunigiana, Messer Tommaso Fregoso at Sarzana, and others were thus dealt with. Even the Lord of Piombino, who in truth did not deserve to be let off so easily, was admitted to the benefits of the same rule. Only the Fieschi, who were considered to have been the more immediate cause of bringing the war into the maritime districts of central Italy by their forwardness in declaring for the Visconti, were adjudged to lose the hill district of Pontremoli, which the events of the war had taken from them, and some other places which had previously belonged to them. A.D. 1433

But there was one important exception to the application of this general rule of restoration, which seems to show that the course of the war must have sufficiently proved to the Duke of Milan and to the Venetians that upon the whole the power of the former was for the present at least on the wane, and that of the latter in the ascendant. For

A.D. 1433. as between Milan and Venice the conditions of the peace were, that the Duke should restore to the Republic all that he had taken from Venice during the war, but that the Republic should hold finally all that it had succeeded in taking from the Duke.

The peace, made and signed on these terms, was formally published in Florence on the 10th of May, 1433, amid the usual rejoicings.* "They rang the bells, and they made bonfires," says the same sneering chronicler before cited; "but there was no real rejoicing except among the poor. And the financial condition was in no respect improved." But the last assertion is manifestly incredible; and the ratification of a peace was always as acceptable an occasion for a holiday and a shouting in Florence as the enthusiasm for the commencement of a popular war. Italy was once again at peace, and Florence was not much the worse for the war,—save in the addition of another heavy mass of debt to the burthens of the Commonwealth.†.

* Giovanni Morelli, *loc. cit.* p. 109.

† Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. i. p. 269; Ammirato, lib. xx. Gonf. 851.

CHAPTER II.

Progress of factious division—Danger that it might lead to a tyranny—Rinaldo degli Albizzi and Cosmo de' Medici—Causes and consequences of their opposition—The aristocratic faction wish to attempt a *coup d'état*—Dissuaded by Niccolò da Uzzano—His remarkable statement—Constitutional questions raised by the remarks of Niccolò da Uzzano—Proposal of legally murdering Cosmo de' Medici—Conclusions to be drawn thence—Conclusion of the advice of Niccolò da Uzzano—His death—Party nick-names—Puccio Pucci, the founder of that family—Averardo de' Medici—Exasperation of party feeling—Perversions of the constitution—In 1433 Rinaldo degli Albizzi strikes a blow at the Medicean party—Cosmo cited to appear before the Signory—His imprisonment—Fears of poison—Supper in the Alberghettino—Cosmo bribes the magistrates—A parliament called—A "balia" granted—Cosmo de' Medici banished to Padua—He runs some danger of violence in quitting the city—Others of the Medici exiled—Popular feeling in Florence—Cosmo permitted to reside at Venice—Blunder which the aristocratic party had made—Macchiavelli, his character and turn of thought—The nature of his "Principe"—Causes of the differences between mediæval and modern political estimates—Contemporary political sentiment respecting the enmity between Albizzi and Medici—The aristocratic party endeavour to secure themselves—Rinaldo degli Albizzi schemes an alliance with the "Grandi"—Rejected by the other members of the party—Letter of Acciaiuoli to Cosmo—Pope Eugenius IV. at Florence—Causes which made the return of Cosmo desired in the city—Defeat of Florentine troops near Imola—A Signory favourable to the Medici is elected—The chiefs of the aristocratic party try to raise insurrection in the city—Albizzi is induced by Pope Eugenius to go to him in Santa Maria Novella—And during this interview the city is quieted—A parliament is called, and a "balia" created—Rinaldo degli Albizzi is sent into exile, and Cosmo de' Medici recalled.

A HOLLOW peace had once again been patched up between Florence and her implacable and never-resting enemy Filippo Maria Visconti, and the territory of the Commonwealth had escaped whole and unscathed from

A.D. 1433. the dangers and vicissitudes of the war. But it may well be believed that Giovanni Morelli was right, when, returning home at night from witnessing the street rejoicings on the occasion of the peace, he jotted down in his diary the remark, that there was no real gladness save among the poorer citizens, who hoped that peace would imply a less frequent call of the tax-gatherer at their doors. For not only had the war, discreditably and wantonly begun by Florence, wholly failed to attain the object for the sake of which it had been undertaken, and which was always one dear to the hearts of the Florentine populace; but it had been the means of greatly intensifying the evils and dangers arising from a division of the city into two hostile factions ranged under two recognized chiefs. This latter circumstance was of especially significant and ugly import among the signs of the times, as pointing to a danger which Florence had during the whole course of her civil existence always considered, and which every good Florentine still considered, and every man in Florence professed to consider, as the most terrible that could threaten her,—the danger of falling under the hated "*governo di un solo*,"—of becoming the possession and the heritage of a "tyrant;" of sinking, in a word, to be even as the cities of the plain, Milan, Verona, Mantua, and the rest of the Lombard and Romagnole Signor-ridden communities.

This was the danger which already began to loom large on the political horizon to the eyes of those Florentines who looked a little beyond the immediate present, and which prevented all such from joining very heartily in any public rejoicings. That the Commonwealth should be torn by factions and by the violence of parties was an evil of ancient date in Florence, one indeed from which it had hardly ever been free, and to which its citizens were thoroughly broken in and hardened. But the new evil was, that the parties into which the city was now divided

had been more and more manifestly and openly, even avowedly, ranging themselves under two single chieftains,—Cosmo de' Medici and Rinaldo degli Albizzi. And the circumstance that both of them had concurred in the policy of entering on the late war, in opposition to the counsels of Niccolò da Uzzano, the other most prominent leader of the aristocratic party, had in no degree tended to lessen the rivalry and hatred between them. A.D. 1433.

On the contrary, the conduct and events of the war had continually been made the means of exasperating the two parties more bitterly against each other, and of dividing them by a more clearly-marked and plainly visible line of demarcation. From the necessities of the case, many more members of the aristocratic party had been employed in the conduct of the war than of the popular party. The former were naturally and necessarily more fitted for the work to be done; and it was impossible for the Medicean faction to prevent this from being the case. But none the less did they writhe with rage and envy at the necessity of submitting to this; and "not being able to remedy it, strove with every art and with the utmost industry to calumniate those" to whom the conduct of the war was entrusted. The words marked as a quotation are those of Macchiavelli;* and it is not a little notable to find him using them only a few lines after a passage in which he had spoken of Cosmo as being one "all liberality, all humanity, who never plotted anything against parties or against the State!" "Whenever any disaster befell," he goes on to say, in speaking of the state of the city during the war,—"and there befell but too many,—it was not attributed to our ill-fortune, or to the superior power of the enemy, but to the defective management of the Commissary. Hence the crimes of Astorre Gianni were

* Ed. cit. vol. i. p. 270.

A.D. 1433. exaggerated; hence Messer Rinaldo degli Albizzi was goaded into quitting his post without leave, and throwing up his appointment. This same cause gave rise to all the other accusations that were made against the government and the commissaries. For those which were just were exaggerated, and when there was no just cause for censure they were invented. And the true and the false were equally believed by the people, which equally hated all of them."

The general result was, that the popularity arising from having urged on a war for an object dear to the populace remained to Cosmo and the Medicean party; while the odium which was caused by the ill-success of it, and the disappointment of the popular hopes, fell to the share of the aristocrats, who had the management of it in their hands.

Already in 1432, while the war was raging, the increasing evil and danger from this state of things in the city had been felt to be so urgent by the leaders of the aristocratic party, that several among them were tempted to try a bold and violent stroke for the abatement of them. And Messer Niccolò Barbadori, one of the more ardent among them, sought an interview with Niccolò da Uzzano, the Nestor of the party, now a very old man, to consult with him, and induce him to consent to attempting a *coup d'état.*

Macchiavelli gives in full a long speech, which purports to be the answer of the old statesman to the application of Barbadori. If it is not in reality such, it contains at all events the substance of Macchiavelli's own appreciation of the political condition of Florence at that time, and his idea of that which the most wise and prudent man of the aristocratic party ought, as such, to have answered to such suggestions as those of Barbadori.

"It would be better for you, my friend," began the

greybeard with a touch of Tuscan pleasantry, "and for those who are acting with you, if your beard were of silver rather than of gold, as your name imports. For then your plans and counsels would probably be less rash. As for driving Cosmo from Florence, those who dream of such a thing would do well to measure accurately their own forces against his. You have baptized this party of ours, 'the party of the nobles,' and call it the opposite to the plebeian party. If such an appellation correctly described it, there would be reason to think that, in case of any commotion, we should have more to fear than to hope, when we reflect on what has been the lot of all former noble castes in this city. But our position is a much worse one than that; for our party is disorganized, while that of our adversaries is compact and entire." A.D. 1433.

He then proceeded to name a number of noble families, some of the members of which had from motives of family quarrels and jealousies severed themselves from their own party and joined that of their adversaries. "So that in truth," he continued, "if we look well through the component parts of either party, I do not see why our party deserves to be called the party of the nobles more than theirs. And if the reason for such an appellation is sought in the fact that *they* are followed by the populace, they are in consequence by so much in a better position, and we in a worse;—so much so that if it came to blows, or to an absolute division of the city, we should be in no condition to resist them. And if we still occupy the dignified position we do in the Commonwealth, we owe it to the past reputation of the present form of government, which our party has known how to preserve for half a century. But if now any struggle should arise, and our actual weakness should be discovered, it would be all over with us. If again you tell me that the goodness of our cause, and of the motives which actuate us, would give us a credit in

A.D. 1433. the city which would be denied to them; I reply to you that this justice and goodness, in order to produce any such effect, must be seen and admitted by others as well as by ourselves; the exact contrary to which is the case. For the consideration that moves us is wholly based on the fear that this city may become subject to a prince. And if we have this fear, others have it not;—nay, worse than that, they make the same accusation against us that we make against them. The conduct of Cosmo, which causes us to suspect him, is in fact this;—that he makes himself useful to every one with his money;—that he does this not only to private individuals, but to the Commonwealth; and not only to Florentines, but to the foreign captains of mercenary troops;—that he favours* this, that, and the other citizen in their aspirations to the magistracies;—that he brings forward this and the other adherent of his own to high position in the State by the means of the wide-spread popularity he enjoys with the masses. It would be requisite therefore to adduce as reasons for banishing him, that he is charitable, kind, liberal, and beloved by everybody. But I should like to know under what law these qualities are to be condemned. And though we know very well that all these modes of conduct are so many means of bringing men's necks under the yoke of a tyranny, yet men will not believe them to be such, nor can we persuade them that they are so. For our own conduct has alienated from us the trust of the citizens; and accustomed as they are and have been to a life of partisanship, they will not lend their ears to any

* The "favouring" alluded to was the paying the arrears due from a citizen to the exchequer, and thus making him "*netto di specchio*," and so opening to him the career of the public honours and employments, from which the law requiring every candidate for office to be "clear on the tax-gatherer's books" shut out a great number of citizens, in times when that functionary's demands had for some time past been such that many a respectable householder had found it very difficult to meet them.

such accusations. But suppose that we should succeed in banishing him, as it might not be very difficult to do when we chanced to have a Signory propitious for the object, how, bearing in mind the number of his friends, who would eagerly desire his return, can you imagine that it would be possible to prevent it? It would be absolutely impossible for you to secure this. And the more of his known and acknowledged friends you banished with him, the greater number of enemies would you have made for yourselves among those left in the city. And the result would be that after a short time he would return upon our hands, and all that you would have gained would be that having banished him while there is still some good in him, you would have him back again thoroughly bad. For he would be made so by those who would have brought about his recall, and whose impulsion he would not be able to resist, seeing what an obligation he would be under to them." * A.D. 1433.

"If, on the other hand," continued the old partisan chieftain coolly and calmly,—and the argument he is about to use is very notable as an indication of the temper and social manners of the epoch;—"if you should seek his death, you will never succeed in compassing it by legal means. For his money, and the venality of your own hearts, would always supply the means of safety to him."

It is worth while to pause for a moment to consider the import of the suggestion thus put by Macchiavelli into

* If old Niccolò da Uzzano really said all this, on the occasion in question, it must be admitted that never did political foresight achieve a more remarkably correct and accurate prediction of all that did really occur. The statement is so precisely accurate, that it may perhaps be taken as evidence that the words are those of Macchiavelli writing in the sixteenth century rather than those of Niccolò da Uzzano speaking in the fifteenth. The interest attaching to them, however, is no smaller if we suppose the former to have been the truth, than if we suppose the old Florentine aristocrat statesman to have spoken from the fulness of his political sagacity.

A.D. 1433. the mouth of Niccolò da Uzzano,—the old and wise statesman, who had for so many years been specially noted for his moderation and forbearing party policy.

One course open to the adversaries of Cosmo de' Medici, and needing to be discussed, was, it seems, the condemnation of him to death by legal means. Now to the student of constitutional history, or to any reader interested in examining the problem which was set forth in the earliest pages of this history as the main and great lesson in political science which this Florentine story in its epic completeness has to teach, a far more interesting question than any of the merely temporary considerations affecting the party warfare of the moment prominently protrudes itself. Death by legal means! *What* were the legal means, we specially wish to know, by which Cosmo de' Medici might have been put to death? The problem submitted for examination was, as the reader will probably remember, this:—Why did a social organization, which seemed to promise so much,—which showed itself to be a soil capable of forcing crops of civil progress much more rapidly than those that could be grown under the feudal system of culture,—which had produced, and was still, at the epoch reached by this history, producing large and admirable results of energy, wealth, and power,—why did this system suddenly and prematurely break down, and come to an altogether bad and deplorable ending? What was the congenital malady that deposited in the constitution of the body social the seeds that caused this early death? From time to time in the course of this narrative the attention of the reader has been called to the symptoms of the fatal disease as they have shown themselves,—cropping out to the surface occasionally, but unceasingly operative less visibly, and mining the health of the body politic,—in the events of the story, and yet more in the temper of men's minds, which led to those events. And

now again a small but most alarming symptom manifests itself;—not even an event—for Cosmo was not put to death;—merely a suggestion put forward as an hypothesis by a statesman. But in those few words dropped and so quickly passed over by Niccolò da Uzzano,—or put into his mouth by Macchiavelli, who deemed that those were the thoughts and the words which would have occurred to Uzzano on the occasion,—the clinical student of social pathology will see quite enough to warrant the gloomiest diagnosis of the condition of the patient. A.D. 1433.

Under what law could Cosmo de' Medici be condemned to death, or even accused of capital crime? There was, it is true, the court of the Captains of the Guelph Party, with its inappellable jurisdiction and monstrous power,—itself a portent fraught with warning of the most terrible social dangers;—and it is true that there were not wanting precedents for the exercise of the extreme legal power of that tribunal, which had by law the lives of the citizens in its hands. But to have accused Cosmo de' Medici of Ghibellinism would have been more monstrous than to have condemned Danton as an aristocrat. Niccolò da Uzzano had, in the same speech in which he adverts to the possibility of this legal murder, pointed out that no real ground of crimination could be found against Cosmo. Yet he considers that the only bar to the project of getting rid of him by the action of the magistrates was to be found in the certainty that the magistrates would be bribed by so wealthy a prisoner! The venerable republican politician suspected—in all probability with entire sincerity—that Cosmo was aiming at the acquisition of an authority in Florence incompatible with the fundamental constitution of the city. But he admitted that the men of his own party were suspected of the same designs by their adversaries. And yet he saw no reason against condemning his political opponent to death on this suspicion, save the

A.D. 1433. difficulty of securing a condemnation, which arose from his power of bribing the magistrates! A law of "suspected persons" was called for in a community where all knew themselves to be equally objects of suspicion! A grey-beard statesman, notoriously the most moderate politician in the community, well knowing that all parties had equally barrels of gunpowder for their seats, would have resorted to the tossing of fire-brands to and fro, had it not been that his chief opponent was provided with a special wet blanket for the insurance of his personal security!

Not that we, from the height of our nineteenth-century enlightenment, are entitled to marvel much at the want of wisdom, fatal as its consequences were, manifested by those pioneers in the army of modern social civilization. There have been public safety laws and scaffolds for the "suspected" in later centuries than the fifteenth. And emphatic as the teaching has been, and repeatedly as the lesson has been reiterated, it is perhaps even yet too soon to assume that policied mankind has definitively learned that human society is simply impossible under such conditions;—that such a legislation is not a party weapon by means of which a party victory may be obtained, to be afterwards enjoyed tranquilly in better times, but is an universal solvent, equally fatal to those who first avail themselves of its powers, and to those against whom they are in the first instance directed. The Community, whose wisest and most prudent men could see no reason why such a citizen as Cosmo de' Medici was at that time, should not be put to death by the action of law (save the accidental difficulty that he would be sure to bribe his judges), lived in a social system already predoomed to dissolution at no very distant date.

"But supposing," continued the veteran party chieftain, who was then too close upon the time of his own final dismissal from the scene for the wisdom or lack of wisdom

in his counsels to be of any personal import to himself, A.D. 1433. "supposing that Cosmo were put to death, or, if you will, supposing that he were banished not to return again, I confess that I do not see the advantage which our Republic would have gained. For in making itself free from Cosmo, it would enslave itself to Messer Rinaldo. And I for my part am of those who desire to see no citizen superior in power or authority to another. But if need were that one or other of those two should prevail, I do not know what cause I have to prefer Messer Rinaldo to Messer Cosmo. But on this head I will only say, may God in His mercy forbid that this city should become subject to the tyranny of any one of its citizens! But if so it be that our sins have merited such a chastisement, God grant that it may not be the Albizzi to whom Florence should have to bow! I cannot, therefore, counsel you," concluded the old man, "to enter on a line of conduct full of danger of all kinds, or to imagine that, backed only by a few, you can make successful opposition to the will of the majority. For all these citizens, some of them from ignorance, and some of them of set purpose, are ready to sell this Republic. And Fortune is favourable to them in that they have found a purchaser."

These words, or rather the line of conduct indicated by them, as that which he intended to follow himself, restrained Rinaldo and the more violent members of his faction, as the aged leader of the aristocratic party had often done before. But in that same year, 1433, old Niccolò da Uzzano, whose forbearing prudence had for so many years been the chief means of keeping the party hatreds in the city from flaming into open violence, died. And soon afterwards the war, which always to a certain degree served, not to prevent a long accumulation of partisan hatred from storing itself up, but to put off the period for the gratification of it, was brought to a con-

A.D. 1433. clusion. The Florentines had no subject on which to expend their never-satiated love of political gossip, save the internal affairs of the city. And there the two party chiefs were in presence, dividing Florence into two hostile camps, and making their ground of quarrel and motives for mutual hatred accessible to the meanest capacity, by the invention of those nick-names and party catchwords which are the most efficient weapons of party strife, and afford a ready and satisfactory cause for enmity to the masses who are too ignorant to comprehend the real nature of the matters in dispute. One party called themselves "*I Buoni*," and the other "*I Belli*,"—the Good and the Good-looking. At a slightly different period the names in vogue were "*Valacchi*" and "*Uomini da Bene*,"—Wallachians and men of respectability; but which of these appellations belonged to either party the old chronicler,* who has recorded these forgotten watchwords, does not enable us to guess. The aristocratic party were especially fond of sneering at the followers of Cosmo as "*Puccini*," a name given to them from Puccio Pucci, a man belonging to one of the minor guilds, who, from the native energy of his character and his cleverness, had acquired a very great influence among the people, and who was a firm adherent and most valuable friend and ally of Cosmo. Puccio Pucci, whatever his governing motive may have been, took the winning side at a critical time; and his descendants are now among the wealthiest nobles of Florence, while most of the families that formed the aristocratic party which made a byeword of his name have either become extinct, or have long since fallen from their high estate.

Another powerful supporter and right-hand man of Cosmo was his cousin Averardo de' Medici. He was the

* Cavalcanti, Istorie Fiorentine, recently printed for the first time, in two vols. 8vo., Firenze, 1838, vol. i. p. 4.

hot spirit of the party. Prompt, bold, audacious, full of resource, having as influential an ascendancy over the upper classes of the Medicean partisans as Puccio had over the masses of the people. Each of these men was the complement of the other; and both were thoroughly devoted to their chief. A.D. 1433.

And from day to day the minds of the citizens became more and more excited and exasperated, and the symptoms that matters were rapidly coming to a crisis in the city, grew daily more and more unmistakable. Everybody was on the alert and full of vigilance and suspicion. Every election to office was scanned and canvassed with anxiety. Votes were counted; the composition of every board of magistrates was eagerly examined. Causes were decided by the tribunals solely with reference to party considerations. "Not a magistrate in the city did his duty!" * The drawing of the names of the Signory by lot from the "*borse*" or purses, on which method the whole constitution of the Commonwealth was based, had become a farce. The executive, in whose hands the power was lodged for the time being, so managed, that it was perfectly well known for a year or more in advance who were to be drawn for Gonfalonieri and Priors for each coming term of two months; and every sort of intrigue and scheme of corruption was prepared for prospective action accordingly. And this knowledge of the probable composition of the Signory for months in advance,—of facts, that is to say, which according to the theory of the constitution depended altogether on chance,—was not even confined to those classes of society, which came into social contact with politicians and the leading men of either party. They became known in the streets. There was a blind impostor, one Benedetto, who made a trade of *foretelling* to the

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. i. p. 275.

A.D. 1433. quid-nuncs and gossips of the "*loggie*" and "*piazze*," what name would come out from the balloting bags as Gonfalonieri for any given two months. And as his predictions were almost invariably correct, his trade was a thriving one.*

It was not possible that this state of things should long continue, without coming to a head in some act of violence or more or less extra-legal tentative on the part of one or the other faction. In fact it had come to that pass, that the leaders on either side were justified in feeling that it was for them not only a struggle for pre-eminence and power, but a question of personal safety. There were not wanting ugly and evil-boding memories on either side, serving not only as incentives to revenge, but as warnings of danger. Rinaldo degli Albizzi especially had some reason for thinking that, as matters were now in Florence, it could hardly be that both he and Cosmo de' Medici should live securely within the same walls. It was very little more than half a century since his father's uncle, together with many of the adherents of their house, had perished on the scaffold at the dictation of a Medici.†

Of course the opportunity for attempting any efficacious blow on either side depended on the constitution of the Signory, which, as the reader knows, was changed every two months. The excessive pressure of the public burthens, during the years of the recent war, and the rigorous application of the "*catasta*" had caused a large number of citizens of all classes to become debtors in arrear to the exchequer, and to be inscribed as such on the "*Specchio*" —the fatal black-book, which peremptorily excluded from all office all names inserted on its pages. And this pro-

* Cavalcanti, *op. cit.* vol. i. p. 498.

† Piero degli Albizzi was legally murdered in 1379, when, after the Ciompi outbreak, the city was under the domination of Salvestro de' Medici.

vision, together with the large number of exclusions which had arisen from it, became a means of facilitating the operations of those "wire-pullers," who more or less completely regulated the elections, and opened a large field to intrigue, and especially to the application of money power. For the most part this opportunity for buying the adherence of their fellow-citizens operated most powerfully on behalf of the Medici; as their means of using it were by far the largest. But there came a chance of investing a little capital profitably in this manner which Messer Rinaldo did not let slip. A.D. 1433.

It was towards the autumn of the year 1433, that he thought he saw a chance for striking the blow which he had so long been meditating. The Signory which was to enter on office on the first of September in that year, was almost entirely composed of men hostile to the Medicean faction. And the Gonfaloniere would be Bernardo Guadagni, a man in all respects adapted for Rinaldo's purpose, were it not that he was a defaulter, and his name inscribed on the disqualifying register of the "*Specchio.*" But this circumstance only gave the Albizzi the opportunity of having a Gonfaloniere more completely his own creature. He hastened to pay Messer Bernardo's arrears for him; and when the first of September came, and the name of Bernardo Guadagni in strange coincidence with the presentiments of the knowing ones, and with the predictions of blind Benedetto, was drawn forth from the urn as Gonfaloniere, he was found perfectly "*netto di Specchio,*" and entered upon his career of office accordingly.

Very little time was lost by the conspirators,—for by such a name the plans of Rinaldo and the Signory in office justify us in calling them;—in making the bold stroke they had decided on. On the seventh of September Cosmo de' Medici was cited to appear before the Signory at the Palace. Many among his friends counselled him to

A.D. 1433. disregard the summons. But Cosmo was not the man either to be deterred by personal fear from doing that which the interest of his ambition demanded, or to give his enemies an advantage by making such a mistake as to show that he was afraid of meeting the members of the government openly in the Palazzo Pubblico, or to injure the prospects of his own game by any impolitic precipitation of a catastrophe. He decided on obeying the citation;—presented himself in the Palace;—and was forthwith, without any pretence of accusation or trial, consigned to a prison within the walls of that building.

About half-way up that tall slender tower, so picturesque in the lawless caprice of its construction and position, which overhangs the *Piazza della Signoria* in Florence, there is a small cell, some eight feet by six or thereabouts, which was called the Alberghettino,—the little lodging! It opens off the tower stair by a low arch and strongly barred door; and to the present day strangers, as they climb to the top of the tower for the sake of the look-out it affords over all Florence, and those countless villas on the hill-sides around, which, "if gathered within walls would be equal to Rome twice * told," turn aside to visit the prison in which Florence shut the man, who was to be honoured by her as "Pater Patriæ." There is little or nothing to see in the small stone cell, in which the only objects are a scanty stone bench in one corner, and a miniature window, from which a small square patch of blue sky may be seen. The spot has not the interest usually connected with places of the kind, arising from the idea of the sufferings that have been endured there. Or at least, if the Alberghettino, as is probable enough, have witnessed such, they were not those of Cosmo.

Nevertheless, he could not fail to feel that his situation

* Ariosto.

was a somewhat critical one. He was for the time being wholly in the power of his enemies. And he was perfectly well aware, that they were men, desiring his death beyond all else, and with whom the question of taking his life would be one solely of prudential consideration. A.D. 1433.

His more immediate fears pointed to poison; and he consequently abstained from taking any food save a little bread. A certain Federigo Malavolti was charged with the custody of him; and this man observing that his prisoner would not eat, strove to persuade him that his enemies would not venture to take his life, and that even if they had designed to do so, he—Malavolti—was not the man who would lend himself to the commission of such a crime. And in order to reassure him more completely, and perhaps to avail himself of a valuable opportunity of making a friend of one, who might yet be in a position to make his friendship the most valuable thing in Florence, the jailer not only sat down himself to supper with his prisoner, but caused a certain official of the palace, one Farganaccio, a noted wag and sayer of good things, to come into the little cell as a third guest at the strange repast.

The supper of those three in the Alberghettino, the dignified and aristocratic but affable political chieftain, the jailer striving to keep up his prisoner's spirits, and to recommend his prison fare, and the facetious man brought thither under such circumstances, together with the strangeness of the place, might, I think, furnish an entirely new subject for a picture.

The introduction of this funny man, however, afforded Cosmo an opportunity of which he did not fail to avail himself. He received him and his jokes with every demonstration of cordiality; and having found the means of speaking to him privately for an instant, he put into his hands a token, which he told him to carry to the treasurer

A.D. 1433. of the hospital of Santa Maria Nuova,—one of the wealthiest corporations in Florence,—to ask him for eleven hundred ducats;—and to carry one thousand of them to the Gonfaloniere, and put the other hundred in his own pocket.

For Cosmo, knowing, as the historian says, that the Gonfaloniere had had his tax-arrears paid as the price of conspiring his ruin, considered that a needy man might by a little more money be brought to conspire for his safety. All he asked of the Gonfaloniere by his messenger, was that his lordship would condescend to visit him in his prison. The money was handed over, and the visit paid; and the Gonfaloniere in council was found quite to have changed his mind as to the expediency of putting the prisoner to death; urging that exile would meet all the necessities of the case.

Meantime, however, such an event as the sudden arrest of Cosmo de' Medici had not passed without throwing all the city into a state of agitation and excitement. Of course his friends, and they were almost all the commonalty of the city, were furious; and his enemies felt that a step had been taken which left them no chance of permanent safety, save by his death. The Piazza was rapidly filled; and the roar of excited voices is recorded to have reached the prisoner in his lofty cell, assuring him that at least Florence had not acquiesced quietly in his misfortune.

On the 9th the Signory called the people to "parliament" on the Piazza, having first taken the precaution of closely lining it with armed men, on whom they could rely. Thus prepared they came down to the "*ringhiera*" —or *haranguing* place, in the Piazza, and briefly demanded of the people, that in consideration of the grave circumstances, and the critical position of the Commonwealth, a "*balia*" or commission with extra powers should be given

to two hundred named citizens. The details of this scene in the Piazza show very curiously how very flimsy a pretence of consulting the popular will sufficed in Florence on such an occasion as the present to suspend all the guarantees of the constitution, and turn the republic in the space of half an hour into a despotism of the most dangerous and intolerable description. A.D. 1433.

As soon as the Signory had taken their places in the "*ringhiera*," Messer Filippo, a clerk of the council, cried aloud, "Oh! people of Florence, are you persuaded that both of the parties in the city are here present on the Piazza?" (The Piazza was lined with the armed satellites of the party in power.) And the crowd answered: "Ay! ay! there are two parties here present, sure enough, and more!" Then Filippo cried out again: "Are you content that a commission should be named with authority to reform the State for the good of the Commonwealth?" And the crowd shouted "Yes, yes!" till their voices filled all the sky.* And then the trick was done. The powers assumed by this commission were of the most extensive description, amounting indeed, as Ammirato remarks, to a delegation into their own hands of the entire powers of the State, and "the conferring of authority to do whatever it was competent for the whole body of the citizens to do;"—with the sole specified exception of interfering in any way with the "*catasta.*" This most recently-acquired guarantee of the people against unequal taxation by the nobles, was, it would appear, too precious in their eyes to be voted into danger, however tumultuously, or under whatsoever intimidation.

All else that the Signory asked was voted by acclamation; and the board of two hundred thus created, and of course carefully selected with a view to the exclusion of

* Cavalcanti, *op. cit.* vol. i. p. 512.

A.D. 1433. any save devoted adherents of the Albizzi party, entered on its functions of almost irresponsible and unlimited power. Some days were spent in framing a number of ordinances, all calculated to fortify and consolidate the power of this all but despotic government, and to secure the permanence of it. At last, on the 3rd of October, Cosmo was once again called from his prison cell in the tower, to appear before the Signory, and was informed that he was sentenced to banishment for the space of five years, with the obligation to reside during that time at Padua.

Doubtless during the days which had intervened since his imprisonment, there had been eager debating among those, who had the power in their hands, as to his fate. And there can be as little doubt that Rinaldo, who well knew the truth of the representations, which Niccolò da Uzzano had made to him, when they had talked together on this subject, was anxious to secure the death of a man, whose life he felt to be incompatible not only with the projects of his own ambition, but with his personal safety. But either the prudence of a majority among the two hundred plenipotentiaries, who had his fate in their hands, or a judicious use of the prisoner's wealth in the manner in which he had already so successfully employed it, prevailed, and it had been decided to abstain from blood. Two different propositions were made, by members of the new government, to Malavolti, who had the care of the prisoner;—one to undertake himself the poisoning of him;—the other to allow the two men, who made the proposal, to have access to the cell at night; when they purposed to throw the prisoner from the tower to the pavement below, and hang a broken rope from the window, so that it might be believed that he had fallen in trying to escape. But Malavolti had been too honourable or too prudent a man to yield to these suggestions.

Cosmo, with the perfect command of temper which stood him in good stead on many an occasion, and gave him an important advantage over the hot impetuosity of his adversary, accepted the sentence of the unconstitutional tribunal, which had condemned him, with every appearance of cheerful, and even good-humoured resignation. He trusted, he said, to find the means of being useful to his country abroad, since it was judged more desirable for the tranquillity of the city, that he should not reside in it. He only begged, that since the government had in its clemency seen good to spare his life, it would take sufficient means for the protection of it; for even then sounds were audible from the Piazza, which indicated very unmistakably that it was in no small danger. A.D. 1433.

In fact Ormanno, the son of Rinaldo degli Albizzi, was on the Piazza, with a considerable body of armed retainers, and many of the more violent and compromised members of the party, who were bent on Cosmo's death at any cost, or by any means. And cries of, "Death to Cosmo! and then let things go as they may!" were heard repeatedly. And there were busy tongues at work, actively striving to persuade the crowd, that the only safety for those who had taken any part against the Medici, was to be found in his death.

It was of course necessary for the prisoner to traverse the Piazza, on leaving the palace, on his way out of the city. And it was very evident that his demand for protection was not a needless one. So the favouring Gonfaloniere, took him by night secretly to his own house; and sent him thence on his way to the frontier, with a strong escort of armed men.

Lorenzo, Cosmo's brother was at the same time exiled to Venice for two years; Averardo his cousin, to Naples for ten years; and Giuliano, Averardo's son, to Rome for two years. Several others of the family were also banished

A.D. 1433. for longer or shorter terms. And Puccio Pucci and his son Giovanni were also sent into exile.*

Florence remaining thus "widowed of so great a citizen," —the phrase is Macchiavelli's—"and of one so much beloved," every one was, "as it were, stunned" and terrified at what had been done. Those who had done the deed were no less anxious and uneasy, than the adversaries, over whom they had triumphed. In fact the former were in by far the worse and more dangerous situation of the two. Cosmo de' Medici in his exile at Venice † was in truth more powerful in Florence than Rinaldo degli Albizzi, and his future prospects far better. The truth was, that Messer Rinaldo had made an irretrievably false step, in his attack on Cosmo. That which Uzzano had predicted was already beginning to be verified with an alarming exactitude. Rinaldo had delivered his blow without force enough at his command to render it effectual. It had been turned aside by the impenetrable shield of Cosmo's wealth. In failing to take his life, Rinaldo had failed entirely; and had only created a danger for himself and his friends, that was almost certain sooner or later to overwhelm him. And nobody knew better than Rinaldo himself that he had failed and blundered;—that it had behoved him either to be sure of taking his enemy's life, or not to strike at all.

It is impossible to read the narrative of these events, and especially to consider the tone in which the numerous

* Cavalcanti, *op. cit.* lib. ix. chap. i.—ix.; Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. i. lib. iv.; Ammirato, lib. xx. Gonf. 853—4.

† He was very shortly permitted to change Padua for Venice: where he was received by the Venetians with the most distinguished honours. A palace was assigned to him, at the cost of the state,—a deputation of senators waited on him; his door was continually thronged by all the notables of the city; and orders were sent to the Venetian ambassadors in Florence, to claim exemption of Cosmo's property from the *catasta*, as that of a Venetian citizen. Cavalcanti, *op. cit.* lib. ix. chap. xxvii.

contemporary or nearly contemporary chroniclers and historians speak of them, without being strongly impressed by the wideness of the distance, which separates the whole moral tone of mind and ethical system of that day and country from our own. And the consideration of this seems to me to throw a singularly explanatory light on the much mooted question of the character and tendencies of the most celebrated of those historians. It appears to me, that if anybody will take the trouble to follow the process of the growth of Macchiavelli's mind in the moral atmosphere that surrounded it, and will then come to the reading of the far-famed "*Principe*" in some sort, as he came to the writing of it, the nature of the sentiments and maxims to be found in that somewhat unreasonably celebrated treatise, will not seem to him so monstrous, and so incredible as to require any far-fetched or "non-natural" theory of the author's intentions for the explanation of them. A.D. 1431

Macchiavelli's book is in fact a treatise on the principles of fence, between a community wishing to be self-governed on the republican system, and a "tyrant" in the mediæval sense of the term, anxious to establish a despotism over them;—that great and interesting fencing match, which was going on in an hundred communities around him, and which was the most universally interesting topic of the day. As to the question, which of the two sides the writer, or reader, should, would or ought to wish to win, that would probably have seemed to the great mediæval politician's mind naturally to depend on the question to what party in the State such writer or reader might belong.

Then as to the ways and means contemplated, and the moral sentiments exhibited, it is necessary that the modern reader, before coming to the appreciation of them as the product of a profound and sagacious mind, should for the

A.D. 1433. moment get rid of a variety of assumed and unquestioned principles that lie, almost unnoticed, deep down among the foundations of his own moral idiosyncrasy, and underlie all his judgments upon the subject. He must, in the first place, get rid of the notion that a tyrant means something necessarily bad, which all good men are, from the force of the term, bound to hate and resist. He must set aside the fixed idea, which has been generated in him by the modern prevalence of legality and order, but which has become so familiar that it seems to him to be a natural and necessary part of the human mind, that to take away a human life otherwise than by due and strictly observed form of law, is *murder*. He must get rid of the feeling—similarly generated—of the exceeding value and sanctity of human life. He must clear his mind of the deep and all-pervading conviction, thoroughly modern, protestant, and unecclesiastic in its parentage, that there are eternal and invariable rules of right and wrong which override and are more valuable than all the technical regulations by which a complicated system of church casuistry, with its intricate labyrinth of exceptions, modifications, and compensations, has sought to guide human conduct, and has succeeded in dwarfing and deforming human minds. Lastly, he must alter the comparative estimate of sundry matters, worldly and unworldly, which the progress of the human mind and the democratic tendencies of modern thought have bred in him, and must adapt his register to the scale that prevailed when Macchiavelli wrote. He must very largely modify the application of the terms "noble" and "ignoble." He must exceedingly enhance the value of princely power and state; of the "greatness" that trappings and braveries, trumpets and cloth-of-gold can confer; of despotic power; of the means of "founding a family," and a name with which fame, no matter in what form, shall busy herself. He must comparatively depress

his estimate of all those other good things which men have mostly learned to consider incompatible with these. A.D. 1433.

The old Pagan sentiment so cynically expressed by Euripides, that no injustice should be done, *save for the securing of empire*, yet lived in the almost equally Pagan minds of the period and people for which Macchiavelli wrote. And a due consideration of the bearing of such a frame of mind on the composition of Macchiavelli's so-called masterpiece, would probably not only have the effect of simplifying the understanding of it in the sense in which the author intended it to be understood, but would perhaps tend to modify not a little the reputation for profound wisdom which has gathered around it. As a literary work, the treatise has the merits arising from great beauty of style, and the lucid logical clearness and vigorous unflinching directness of the writer's mind. There has also been attached to it a sort of half mysterious interest, arising from the somewhat vague idea that it contained revelations of the secrets of a species of black art,—the hidden mysteries of the innermost cabinets of the great and unscrupulously powerful,—the laws of a secret science, not indeed very holy, but terrible in its power of seeing into the dark places of the human heart, tremendous in its demands on the intellect of those who would master it, and specially useful for such as are apprenticed to the guild of State-craft. But it is a mistake, due in some measure to a mere confusion of metaphors, to suppose that those dark places of the human heart are the profound places of the human intelligence. Ignoble thoughts are ever shallow thoughts. Those "master-passions of the breast," on the due recognition of which the Macchiavellian prudence and sagacity are based, are very simple; they are low, coarse, very primitive, and uncomposite sentiments, as well known, unhappily, to every costermonger in the streets as to the Secretary of the Florentine Re-

A.D. 1433. public. Fear and greed,—the fear of pain, of death, of pecuniary loss, the greed of the vulgarest objects of desire, —and the means by which these may most readily be appealed to, are not among the profounder subjects of human thought. Nor does that wisdom, which consists in an unsleeping conviction of their omnipresence, supply a more correct than ennobling view of the universe of men and things.

Not only did the men themselves, whose actions supplied the rules of human conduct which Macchiavelli has codified, understand perfectly well the *rationale* of their course of action; it was equally clear to the humblest of their followers. All the city knew perfectly well why Rinaldo degli Albizzi wanted to kill Cosmo de' Medici, and why Cosmo would by-and-by be equally desirous to kill Rinaldo. They all knew that the latter had made a false stroke, and had put himself and his friends into great danger by his imprudence.

But what is really worthy of special notice is the means of measurement of the moral distance between those mediæval Italians and ourselves, which, as has been said, may be found in the tone in which the contemporaries of these men regarded the attempt of the one to take the life of the other. Nowhere in the pages of the historians or chroniclers can any word of blame or reprobation for the conduct of Rinaldo be found, save on the score of hot-headed imprudence. On the contrary, he is universally spoken of, even by those whose sympathies were with the other party, as a noble and estimable cavalier. That he should have wished to do his enemy to death was a natural and necessary piece of policy, stained only by its non-success. And the venerable Niccolò da Uzzano, who was perhaps more universally looked up to and respected than any man in the city, had, in speaking of the design of putting the Medici to death, objected solely on the ground

of the small chance of succeeding in the attempt. And yet the taking of Cosmo's life by any of the means by which his adversaries proposed to compass it, would have been as simply murder as any assassination ever perpetrated. It has been seen, indeed, that Rinaldo's son and a large number of his political friends—all honourable men!—were prepared and eager to kill their enemy by assassination in the Piazza. A.D. 1433

The aristocratic party,—so called rather because it was such in its original constitution, than because such a designation was any longer justly applicable to it, except, as old Niccolò da Uzzano had shown, in so far as the masses of the populace followed the leaders of the other party,—the aristocratic party and their chief Rinaldo degli Albizzi began, immediately after Cosmo's departure, to realize the dangers of the position they had made for themselves. The friends and adherents of the Medici who remained in the city were far too numerous to be cowed and silenced by the absence of the members of that family. The mode in which Cosmo had been received at Venice, and the quasi-public and official honours paid to him, had been not only an affront and rebuke to the authors of his banishment, but were a serious evil to them, as affording an encouragement and means of consolidation to the Medicean party within the walls of Florence. It became evident to Rinaldo that things could not remain as they were;—that his present position would not long be tenable;—that something must be done, not merely to assure the political ascendancy of his party, but to provide for his own personal safety and that of his friends.

And the only means of strengthening himself that his meditations suggested to him was the formation of an union between his party and the members of that class of "*grandi*" whose families had for now so many years been disfranchised and excluded from all the honours and

A.D. 1433. employments of the State. For some time past these men had exercised little or no influence in the government of the city. But they had the power inseparable from possession of property,—though not such as that derived from the vast masses of the Medicean wealth,—and had probably a more absolute influence and more real power in the country districts where their estates were situated than any leader could exercise within the city. It was true that any such measure as that which Messer Rinaldo contemplated could only be carried out by a revolution, and that such a revolution could be brought about only by a *coup d'état*. There was no hope that the "*grandi*" could be restored to their rights of citizenship by the normal action of the constitution. But Rinaldo degli Albizzi did not, for his own part, shrink from resorting to such means. And it is easily understood that the sort of influence and power which has been described as that which the "*grandi*" could still exercise, would be precisely that which might be available for such a purpose. To fill the city with "*villani*,"—the hardy stout-limbed ignorant peasants who dwelt on the estates of these "*grandi*," and who were always animated by a certain degree of antipathy to the townsmen,—was from very old times a recognized means of attempting to overawe the citizens, and bring about political change by the action of mere brute force. And even the other day, when the late Grand Duke was obliged to leave his capital in 1859, it was curious to mark how the old ideas and traditionary feelings still survived, when a report ran through the city that "the *contadini*" were coming to uphold the cause of irresponsible power by force.

I am not aware, however, of a single instance, during all the time that Florence was a self-governing community, in which the manœuvre was resorted to with success, or in which the citizens failed to hold their own against the

rustics. And perhaps this consciousness, perhaps also ineradicable antipathy against the men, to depress and oppress whom had been for so many generations the main aim and scope of Florentine policy, caused Rinaldo's proposition to be unfavourably received by the other members of the party; and the idea was abandoned. Yet the symptoms that the city was rapidly becoming too discontented to be long held in subjection to the party in power, were more menacing from day to day. Among others, a letter written by Messer Agnolo Acciaiuoli, an influential citizen, to Cosmo in his banishment, and which was intercepted and fell into the hands of the Signory, was not one of the least important. *This letter assured the exile of the strength of his party in the city;—advised him to seek the friendship of Neri Capponi, whose defection, the writer declared, would leave the party in power so weak that they would fall at once;—and suggested that, if any war were to break out, the assistance of Cosmo's purse would be so regretfully desired as to render his triumphant recall certain. A.D. 1434.

Agnolo Acciaiuoli, the writer of this letter, was arrested, tortured, and then exiled. But that did not prevent the statements made in his unfortunate epistle from remaining true, nor so terrify the Florentines as to deter others from engaging in plots and intrigues for the restoration of a citizen, who so managed his immense wealth as to make it felt to be a benefit to the whole community.*

While these events had been passing at Florence, Pope Eugenius IV. at Rome, notwithstanding his desire for peace and a quiet life, had been getting into trouble with a portion of his subjects,—mainly the Colonna family, the kinsmen of his predecessor. He was compelled to escape from Rome, in the disguise of a mendicant monk, with

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. i. p. 281; Ammirato, lib. xx. Gonf. 856.

A.D. 1434. difficulty slipping down the Tiber to Ostia in an open boat, together with only two companions. He escaped from Rome on the 18th of May, 1434; reached Leghorn after a variety of romantic adventures and difficulties on the 12th of June; and entered Florence with much pomp on the 23rd of the same month.

Florence thus for the second time within a few years opened her gates and her hospitality to a penniless Pope in trouble. The reward she had reaped for her disinterested kindness to Pope Martin had not been such, it might have been supposed, as to make her particularly anxious to repeat the experiment. But though Pope Eugenius was as penniless as Pope Martin had been, his name was less obnoxious to a rhyme; and the citizens were once again ready to show that the reverence they professed for the person of the Pontiff was as great when he was in adversity as when he was prosperous, and that if they ever appeared to be less faithful sons of the Holy Father than they could wish, it was only when he showed himself to be in possession of too much, and not of too little power.

So the fugitive Pontiff was received with all the marks of honour that the Commonwealth could show him; and the gossiping old chronicler Cambi has another opportunity of filling his pages with the details of a holiday ceremonial, such as he and the Florentine public took delight in. But these doings are too much like each other for it to be worth the reader's while to go over the description of them again. Again the "entire gate" was opened for the passage of the Vicar of Christ, riding, not an ass, but on a white mule; and this time it was not the Porta San Gallo, but the Porta San Frediano which was thrown open from the coping of the stone arch to the pavement, for the admission of the Pontiff who had slunk out of his own capital in fear and disguise. Again the newly-built apartments in the monastery of Santa Maria

Novella were prepared for the priestly inmate whom Florence delighted to honour, and Pope Eugenius took up his abode in the same dwelling whose timely and welcome hospitality his predecessor had so unworthily requited. A.D. 1434

Meantime things within the city had gradually been assuming an aspect more and more disquieting to Rinaldo, and the aristocratic party who had the government in their hands.

It has been explained that there were several special causes at work, to make the return of Cosmo de' Medici desired in Florence. The number of citizens in every class of life, who felt and regretted the absence of a man, whose apparently inexhaustible purse was always open to his friends in distress, was far larger than the habits and the proportions of things in our modern social life would lead us to imagine readily. The war had again broken out in Romagna, where the forces of the old league,—that is to say, the league of the Florentines, the Venetians, and the Pope,—had come to blows with those of the Duke of Milan; and matters were not going favourably for the allies. A battle had been fought near Imola on the 29th of August, in which Piccinino, still in command of the Duke's troops, had routed the army of the league, and had taken prisoner Niccolò da Tolentino, the Florentine general. All this translated itself within the walls of Florence into hard times, new forced loans, and war taxes. And many a struggling tradesman, who found the waters of debt closing over his head, and looked around in vain for help, bitterly felt that he would not have been allowed to sink if the kindly Medici had not been driven from the city. And scores of men among the governing classes of the city saw themselves cut off from all the dearest objects of Florentine ambition by the inscription of their names on the inexorable "*Specchio*" as defaulting debtors to the State, who were very sure that the magni-

A.D. 1434. ficent and munificent Cosmo would not have allowed a political friend to be thus incapacitated from serving his party, if he had been in Florence.

And then again, what must our allies the Venetians, whose friendship is so absolutely essential to us, think of us for banishing such a man from among us! What they think, is only too clear, from their own conduct in the matter. They have received the exile from Florence as if he had been a sovereign prince. They leave nothing undone which can mark their sense of his worth, and consequently their sense of the conduct of those who have expelled him. They have even ordered their ambassadors here to protect his property from the action of Florentine laws, on the score of claiming him as a citizen of Venice. Is it not madness to let our party hatreds be the means of hunting such a man from among us—and in such times as these too!

So it came to pass that on the 1st of September, despite all the efforts of the party then in power, and all the influence they could bring to bear upon the election, a Signory almost entirely favourable to the Medici was voted into office.

This brought matters to a crisis. Rinaldo degli Albizzi, Palla Strozzi, Niccolò Barbadori, and others of the aristocratic faction, at once met in the sacristy of the church of St. Peter the Greater; and Albizzi urged an immediate appeal to arms, and an attempt to cause a rising in the city. The others, however, shrank from the risks of such a course. The news of the defeat in the Romagna, however, and the necessary business connected with the foreign affairs of the Commonwealth, prevented the new Signory from attending to the state of things within the city, or doing anything that would alarm Rinaldo and his party for some time. But on the 26th of September it was reported in the city that the Signory were preparing to put the Palace in a state of defence, and showing other

signs of an intention to take some step which might cause disturbance in the city. And in fact the next thing was a citation by the new Signory, of which Cocco di Donato was the Gonfaloniere, summoning Albizzi and his companions to appear before them at the Palace. They were far more justified in taking such a step, than their predecessors of a year ago had been in citing Cosmo. For Albizzi and his followers were guilty of conspiring to spread sedition and overt resistance to the constitutional government. A.D. 1434.

But unlike Cosmo, Rinaldo and his friends, with the exception of Palla Strozzi—who was, we are told, a man more fitted for studious and literary retirement than for the management of civil broils, and who, despite the bitter taunts and objurgations of Rinaldo, definitively separated himself from the rest of the party—instead of obeying the summons of the Signory, hurried with all the armed retainers they could muster, to the Piazza St. Apollinare in the immediate vicinity of the Palace, and thence marched to the *Piazza della Signoria* with a following sufficient very seriously to alarm the magistrates in the Palace. The latter immediately closed and barricaded the doors; and with a want of firmness and civil courage, which shows how easy a thing it was to overturn by a small show of force a government so constituted, entered into a parley with the rebel who was besieging them in the Palace of the Commonwealth, promising him all he could ask, if only he would retire and cease to shock their nerves by the display of arms and armed men.

Albizzi, however, showed no signs of listening to any terms which could be proposed to him. And it is difficult to guess how matters might have gone, and to what extent the whole of the remaining course of Florentine history might have been other than it was, had not the Bishop of Recanati,—Giovanni Vittelleschi—at that crisis made his

A.D. 1434. appearance on the scene,—on the *Piazza della Signoria*, that is to say,—having been sent by Pope Eugenius from his retirement in the monastery of Santa Maria Novella, to endeavour to calm the disturbance in the city. The Bishop with some difficulty succeeded in persuading Albizzi to wait on the Holy Father at Santa Maria Novella. It was in fact difficult for Rinaldo to refuse to wait upon a Pope, who was within a few hundred yards of him, and who specially requested that he would come and speak with him for a few minutes only.

But once in presence of his Holiness, and in colloquy with him, there in the inmost quiet cloisters of the huge monastery of Santa Maria Novella, where the distant roar of the tumult raging in the Piazza scarcely penetrated, it was not easy to get away again very quickly. His Holiness had so much to urge;—so many assurances that, if only Messer Rinaldo would go quietly to his home, and dismiss his armed retainers, nothing would be attempted by the government against him or his friends in any way! There was no idea of anything of the kind; and as for recalling Cosmo de' Medici from his exile, such an idea had never, his Holiness could assure him, entered into the mind of any one.

And when Albizzi at last got away from his audience,—if that may be so called in which the hearing was all on his side,—and returned to the Piazza, not distrusting the intentions of the Pontiff, but thinking that he understood his own fellow-citizens better than his Holiness did, he found that his friends and retainers had dispersed, and all chance of making head against the Government by force was lost.

No sooner, in fact, had the armed followers of the Albizzi faction retired from the Piazza than the courage of the Signory returned to them. In the course of that night they sent off messengers in all haste into the mountains behind Pistoia, where there were some troops in the pay of

the Commonwealth; and before the next evening they had a sufficient force of regular soldiers in the city to overpower any attempt at a rising within the walls. Then they caused the great bell of the Palace to ring out its summons to the citizens to flock to the Piazza. And amid the confusion of armed soldiers filling the Piazza, and the citizens tumultuously hurrying thither, a "*balia*" was decreed in a yet more hasty and summary manner than had marked the creation of that other "*balia*," now just one year old, which had banished the Medici, and thrown all the power of the State into the hands of their enemies. And now the leaders of the late commotion were once again summoned before the Signory. Most of those who were compromised decided on obeying the summons. But Messer Rinaldo was at once too hopeless of any escape from the ruin which he but too well knew was coming on him and his friends, and too proud to do so. He returned to the Pope at Santa Maria Novella instead, unable to refrain from pointing out to him what had been the result of his interference, and the value of his assurances. The Pontiff was grieved and angry with the Florentines for the unpleasant position in which they had placed him, by acting in a manner so at variance with their professed intentions. But he had nothing to say to Albizzi, and no comfort to give him, save of that very cold kind which consists in moral discourses and exhortations to resignation. Messer Rinaldo, for all reply, assured his Holiness that he blamed only himself for having been credulous enough to believe that one who had not been able to preserve his own position in his own city should have power to keep him in his. A.D. 1434

Of course the object of the new "*balia*" was to undo all that the previous one of the last autumn had done. Rinaldo degli Albizzi and all the leading men of his party, even Palla Strozzi, who had refused to join in his insurrection against the civil power, were banished. The sen-

A.D. 1434. tences of exile were far more numerous than had been then fulminated by the opposite party; so much so, that "there was scarcely any town in Italy to which Florentine exiles were not sent; and many cities even out of Italy were full of them; in such sort, that by these means Florence deprived herself, not only of many worthy citizens, but of much wealth and industry."*

Cosmo de' Medici was, as a matter of course, recalled; and "it has rarely happened that any citizen returning in triumph after a victory has been received by his country with such demonstrations of honour and affection as he was when he returned from exile. Every man spontaneously saluted him as the benefactor of the people and father of his country."†

It was on the 1st of October, 1434, that Cosmo entered Florence under these circumstances.

* Macchiavelli.

† Macchiavelli, lib. iv. ed. cit. pp. 282—8; Ammirato, lib. xx. Gonf. 860; Cavalcanti, lib. ix. chaps. xxiv.—xxviii., lib. x. chaps. i.—xvi.

CHAPTER III.

War in Romagna—Professed causes, and real causes of these wars—Rise of the *Condottiere* system—The "Braccian" and the "Sfortian" armies—Deficiency of both of them in high military qualities—Hopes and aims of Niccolò Fortebraccio, and Francesco Sforza—Sforza seizes Fermo—is appointed Gonfaloniere of the Church—Fortebraccio's usurpations at the expense of the Papacy—Sforza undertakes to oust him from them—The Duke of Milan sends Piccinino into Tuscany—Lione Sforza defeated by Fortebraccio while his brother Francesco had gone to oppose Piccinino—Fortebraccio defeated by Francesco Sforza—His death—The duke once again makes peace—Cosmo de' Medici and his party begin to persecute their opponents—Contumacious exiles given up to Florence by the Venetians—Respect for Venice felt by Florence—Unconstitutional power of Cosmo de' Medici—Ammirato, the historian—Macchiavelli—His account of the changes in the constitution introduced by Cosmo—Cosmo had already in all probability conceived the idea of attaining supreme power in Florence—Insensibility of the Florentines to the importance and value of legality—Material improvement and beautification of the city—Francesco Sforza in Florence—Niccolò da Tolentino buried at the expense of the State—Festivals in honour of Sforza—Genoa liberates itself from the Visconti—Eugenius IV. consecrates the cathedral—Florence and Venice make alliance with Genoa—to the great displeasure of Visconti—who is persuaded by Rinaldo degli Albizzi to make war against Florence—Contemporary sentiment respecting this treason of Rinaldo degli Albizzi—Evil prognostics to be drawn from such a state of feeling.

It has been mentioned that, while Cosmo was yet in exile, war had again broken out in Romagna. Troops in the pay and under the colours of Florence and Venice were fighting there against forces in the employment of Filippo Maria Visconti, Duke of Milan. It would need a long and uninteresting *excursus* on the various intricate quarrels and ever-shifting alliances and enmities of almost

A.D. 1434. all the different states of Italy to make intelligible to the reader the grounds on which those armies professed to be there, the nature of the interests they were supposed to be defending, and how it came to pass that Niccolò Piccinino, on behalf of the Visconti, was warring against Niccolò da Tolentino, employed by the Florentines. And when the tangled skein had been unravelled, and the reader had with much trouble and disgust made himself master of the confused story, he would find that it had very small reference to the history of Florence, and exercised little or no influence on that progress and development of the Florentine social and political system which was now rapidly maturing its fruits, and hastening towards the harvest-time.

The story and the professed causes of these quarrels, I say, exercised little or no influence on this progress and development. But the more real and underlying causes of these continual wars did contribute notably towards the shaping of Florentine story and the working out of Florentine destinies. And they admit, moreover, of being very summarily and intelligibly stated.

Gradually those who possessed wealth, property, homes, and commerce to defend in Italy had become incapable of defending them. Gradually the system of doing their fighting by hired proxies had destroyed all military aptitudes and capabilities in Italian citizens. The same system had also generated a race of men who had no other aptitudes and capabilities;—fighters by profession, who could do nothing else but fight. This, of course, as we all know, results in a great measure inevitably from the progress of modern civilization and the principle of the division of labour, on which it mainly rests. Hence all modern states have standing armies; and the history of Europe has not proceeded for three hundred years without teaching us, by abundant lessons, the special dangers which

may arise from the use of them. But at all events these dangers are very much lessened in kind, and the risk of them is greatly diminished when the armies used are strictly national armies. In Italy, however, this was not the case. The fighting men were not only hired soldiers, but foreigners, who owed no permanent allegiance to the State which employed them, had no interest in its welfare, and made no contribution to the taxation by which it paid them. A.D. 1434

And this condition of society had gradually organized and consolidated itself, till at the time which our story has reached, the professional fighting men,—the generals and their armies,—not only had to be reckoned with and consulted in all the political combinations and state arrangements of the time, but had in fact a most potential casting vote in the matter. And it may readily be understood that "their voice was still for war." A long way back in this story, we began to see the gross and intolerable evils arising from the introduction and employment of mercenary bands of soldiers. Their leaders in those days oscillated between the characters of duly commissioned generals and outlawed brigands. Their armies were one day clothed in "the pride, pomp, circumstance of glorious war," and the next were hunted out as cut-throats and bandits. In the first half of the fifteenth century these conditions had become considerably modified. The profession had thriven on its opportunities. It had risen in the world with its indispensability, and the frequency of the calls on its services. And now your general of free-lances, though his position was still a doubtful one, oscillated between that of a hired commander in the pay of a constituted government and that of a sovereign prince, with a local habitation as well as a name, and a state and home of his own.

There were at that time in Italy two "sects of arms," as

A.D. 1434. Macchiavelli phrases it, "the Braccian and the Sfortian." The Conte Francesco Sforza was the head of the latter, and Niccolò Fortebraccio together with Piccinino of the former. Around these two bodies all the minor bodies throughout Italy gathered themselves. Of these two the Sfortian arms were in the highest vogue, continues Macchiavelli, not only by reason of the valour of the Count, but by reason of the promise the Duke Filippo had made to him, that he would give him his daughter Bianca * in marriage, and of the high hopes that might thence arise. So that in reckoning up the powers which at that time divided Italy among them, it would be necessary after duly going over the territorial divisions, to add to the list of potentates the names of those two celebrated soldiers of fortune.

But it would be an error to suppose that this rise in the social status of the military profession had been accompanied by any proportionate improvement in the essential qualities and virtues of the military character. The contrary had been the case. Hear Macchiavelli again on this point. "These wars," he says,† had reached such a pitch of weakness, that they were entered on without dread, were prosecuted without danger, and ended without damage" —to the combatants, be it clearly understood; for the damage to those who had to pay for their fighting and find them in food was manifest enough. "So that," continues the Secretary, "those virtues which in other countries are wont to perish in consequence of prolonged peace, became extinguished among the Italians by the vile cowardice of their constant wars." As the numbers of the hired troops opposed to each other in the Italian wars were increased, and the military profession became organized and systematized, it became more and more distinctly clear to these soldiers fighting for quarrels in the merits of which they took

* An illegitimate daughter. See Litta, Famig. Visconti.

† Book v. ed. cit. p. 7.

no interest, and which excited in them neither any noble sentiment of patriotism, nor any evil passion of hatred, that as on the one hand it was expedient for them that there should be always abundance of war, so on the other hand it was neither necessary nor desirable that they should harm each other in the prosecution of it. And a still further consideration made it appear the height of folly to kill an adversary, who as a prisoner would be worth ransom money to his captor. So that, barring a few accidents necessarily arising from the roughness of the play, the great Italian battles of this period were really little more than a schoolboy's game of prisoner's base, played on a huge—and very costly—scale. We have extant accounts of great engagements between opposing armies, the fortunes of which all Italy was watching with suspended breath, and which terminated in the complete defeat and rout of one of the parties, but in which the list of the slain did not mount beyond the teens. Even the salt of professional honour was wanting to arrest the progress of the moral putrefaction resulting from the practice of such a profession on such principles. The commanders and contractors for the supply of these armies, in rising from the social status of semi-bandit ruffians to that of wealthy chieftains struggling for, and sometimes making good their claim to, the position of sovereign princes, had in no degree become improved as regarded the point of military honour. Fortebraccio, Sforza, Carmignuola, and the rest of them, were to the full as ready to break their engagements, desert their standards and their cause, change sides, and change back again, according to the dictates of the basest and most cynically avowed considerations of interest, as ever their more ferocious predecessors, "enemies to God and to mercy," had been. The "Braccian" and "Sfortian" armies proclaimed war to the knife indeed against all that was eatable, drinkable, A.D 1434

A.D. 1434. consumable, or otherwise usable or portable on the face of the district which had the terrible and scarcely to be pictured misfortune of being the scene of war. But they had no special desire to destroy the thews and sinews which produced all these good things, and furthermore contributed to the taxes, by which they and their horses and arms had to be paid for. And as for being "enemies to mercy" towards each other, they had become far too well broken in to "the usages of civilized warfare." What! kill a "brother in arms!" specially when by capturing him, he may be made to pay for his freedom, or better still, somebody else may be made to pay for him! No! no! The steel-clad heroes of the Italian fifteenth century knew better than that! All that was needed to satisfy and befool the silly citizens and stupid bumpkins who gaped and looked on at, and paid for, their deeds of prowess, was to make a great noise, raise a tremendous dust, and a terrible clang of blowing trumpets and clashing of steel swords belabouring well-forged cuirasses, and the trick was done; requiring only a due amount of swaggering talk and magniloquent braggadoccio to make up all that pride, pomp, and circumstance which was needed for the occasion.

These were the real reasons why war was always breaking out in one quarter or other; and why it had broken out afresh in Romagna, as has been said, while Cosmo was in exile at Venice. Filippo Visconti, though he had by no means abjured his ambitious hopes of extending his dominions, had not been guilty of seeking to break the peace this time. He had received too severe a lesson at the hands of the Venetians at the close of the last round of the fight to be quite ready yet to come up to the contest again.

Besides the necessity of keeping up a state of warfare however, there was another motive running like a clearly

distinguishable coloured thread through all the tangled web of the military story of these years. This was the desire of the two leading captains, Niccolò Fortebraccio and Francesco Sforza, to carve out for themselves somehow and somewhere principalities, which should give them a permanent position and status among the sovereign houses of Italy. And for several reasons, that district of central Italy which eventually became a stable and recognised portion of the Papal States, offered the most promising field for achievements of this kind. In the first place, though the Popes, who never at any time lost anything for want of claiming it, already considered themselves as legitimate sovereigns of all this region, it could scarcely as yet be considered as finally wrested from the hands of the numerous petty tyrants, who claimed to be sovereign lords in its different cities. In the next place, the Pope, never in any age capable of maintaining his own claims to temporal monarchy by his own temporal power, was at the period in question especially weak and friendless. A fugitive from his own rebellious city, he was the guest of a Commonwealth, which was delighted to do everything for him that homage and the most respectful hospitality could do, but which was not prepared to make war in his behalf against the most highly esteemed captains of the day, with whom Florence herself was especially desirous of standing on good terms. So it was at the expense of the Pope that both Sforza and Fortebraccio were striving to erect States for themselves; and at the expense of the wretched inhabitants of those beautiful and fertile regions, that "during many months the contest continued between them with various events, all more to the damage of the Pope and his subjects than of those who were engaged in the war." * It was from the strong and commanding

A.D. 1434

* Macchiavelli, lib. v. ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 9.

A.D. 1434. rock of Fermo, which soars from the plain on the shore of the Adriatic to the south of Ancona to such a height that the mountains of Dalmatia on the opposite coast are visible from it, that Sforza dated his letters, "*Ex Girifalco nostro Firmiano, invito Petro et Paulo;*"—"From our falcon's nest of Fermo, in spite of Peter and of Paul."

And notwithstanding the insolent taunt, Pope Eugenius was fain to make peace with this audacious adventurer, and not only to grant him the sovereignty of the province he had seized, but to make him Gonfaloniere of the Church, and avail himself of his aid against the other masterful man in armour, who was fixing his teeth in another portion of the temporal vitals of the Church. Niccolò Fortebraccio had seized Tivoli, Montefiascone, Citta' di Castello, and Assisi. And Sforza, having had his own usurpations legalised according to the notions of the time, and confirmed to him, undertook to compel Fortebraccio to drop his plunder. And Florence and Venice were willing to do so much for their Holy Father, as to allow their leagued forces to fight under Sforza for this purpose. If Fortebraccio was thus treated as an enemy, the still more important and valuable alliance and services of Sforza were by this means secured and retained.

Fortebraccio had fortified himself in the city of Assisi, a strong position, affording great facilities for defence; and Sforza with the troops of the league besieged him there. But the Duke of Milan, seeing these two great captains thus engaged, and thinking it desirable to prevent the leagued Republics from conquering his old general, sent Niccolò Piccinino, at the head of a Milanese army, into Tuscany, as a means of diverting the forces under Sforza from the siege. The Florentines accordingly, considering it more important to defend Tuscany for themselves than to take Assisi for the Pope, recalled their forces under Sforza for that purpose. That general, however, left a

portion of his army under his brother Lione to watch Assisi, while he hurried to oppose the progress of Piccinino, who had advanced as far as Forli. But while encamped at Cesena, and preparing to dispute the passage with the Milanese, news came that Fortebraccio had suddenly attacked Lione, and utterly defeated him. On hearing these tidings Sforza, again dividing his forces, left a part of them to oppose the progress of Piccinino, and hastened back with the rest to retrieve the misfortune of his brother. And this time the fortune of Sforza was in the ascendant. He was as completely victorious as his brother had been the reverse. And Fortebraccio chanced in the rout to receive a wound of which he died. The result of this victory was not only the restitution to the Pope of all the cities and districts which Fortebraccio had occupied, but it also induced the Duke of Milan once again to make peace with the leagued Republics, which by the intervention of Niccolò di Este, Marchese of Ferrara, was arranged and published on the 10th of August, 1435.* A.D. 1435.

In the meantime, after the return of Cosmo to Florence, which had been celebrated in a manner more like that of a sovereign restored to his states than of a private citizen from exile, all that Niccolò da Uzzano had predicted began to happen. Cosmo was at once made Gonfaloniere for the first two months of 1435. That was a matter of course; and nothing else could have been expected. But, however undeviatingly Cosmo had hitherto shown and used the velvet paw in his dealings with his fellow-citizens, after his return from exile the Medicean claw made itself very unmistakably and memorably felt.

Information having reached the Signory that several of the recently banished citizens,—Rinaldo degli Albizzi

* Macchiavelli, lib. v. ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 11.

A.D. 1435. and his son Ormanozzo among others,—had absented themselves from the places assigned to them as their residence during the period of their exile, they were declared rebels and outlaws. Others were condemned to heavy fines and imprisonment; and new sentences of exile were passed. Nor were capital punishments wanting to complete the inauguration of a reign of terror in Florence. Several heads fell on various pretexts in the court of that grim old Bargello palace, then called the Palazzo del Podestà. The execution of one batch of prisoners caused especial sensation in the city. Some exiles, having quitted the places in which they had been ordered to remain, were found at Venice; and were given up to the Florentine magistrates by the Venetians, who, in the words of Macchiavelli, "esteemed the friendship of Cosmo de' Medici more highly than their own honour." And this was the aspect of the case, which produced so great an effect upon the minds of the Florentines. "How great a man, how powerful, and how much thought of abroad must this Cosmo be, since such a government as that of Venice deems it well to pay this homage to his will."

And the authority of Venice, it may be observed, went for much in such a matter as this in Florence. It would have mattered much less to the Florentine mind what Genoa, and still less what Milan, or any of the other cities had thought about the matter. But frequently recurring indications may be met with of a feeling of respect and esteem for Venice on the part of the Florentines, not altogether willingly yielded, or resulting in any sentiments of good-will or kindliness, but none the less influential that it was wrested from them despite their will. The cause of this feeling may probably be found in the remarkable success of Venice in accomplishing that which Florence could never achieve;—the establishment of a

strong, homogeneous, and consistently acting government, A.D. 1435 which yet was in no danger of becoming the dreaded "*governo di un solo.*"

Macchiavelli, however, in mentioning this incident of the exiles given up by the Venetian government to Florence, adds in a remarkably characteristic spirit, that there were perhaps grounds for believing that the real object of Venice, in acting as she did in this matter, was to make provision for future irreconcileable divisions and intensified hatreds in Florence, and thus for the continued weakness of a rival city, by giving the dominant party the opportunity of shedding blood.

Certainly if the grand object of human polity be the avoidance of the "*governo di un solo,*" Florence had at this time cause to look up to the condition of affairs in Venice with envy. For it must have been evident to every Florentine that they were themselves in imminent and increasing danger of reaching that consummation. The efforts of the party in power for the utter and complete prostration of their adversaries, and for the securing and consolidating in their own hands all the powers of the State, were as unceasing as flagrantly violent and unconstitutional. And they were to all appearance entirely successful. Already Cosmo de' Medici had very much more power in Florence than any one citizen had ever possessed since first the infant community flung from its neck the yoke which its old baronial citizens attempted to impose on it, with a passion that shook so many a battlemented tower and armed fortress to the ground.

When the recently ruling aristocratic party had been well nigh annihilated by exile, by death, by imprisonment, by ruinous fines, and by disqualifications and disenfranchisement, the Medicean faction gave their active attention to the strengthening of their own hands. And this was accomplished by means as unscrupulous as un-

A.D. 1435. constitutional, and as fatal to freedom and self-government as the violences had been which had established a reign of terror.

It is worth notice that the able and generally truthful and impartial historian Ammirato passes over this part of the story of the establishment of the Medicean power very lightly and hurriedly. Ammirato was a Neapolitan, a man of letters by profession, patronized, pensioned, and employed by Cosmo, the first Duke of Tuscany, to write the history of Florence, about a hundred years after the date of the events of which we are now speaking. Taking these circumstances into consideration, Ammirato has acquitted himself of his task with what may be deemed very remarkable impartiality and truthfulness. To a certain degree this may be no doubt accounted for by the fact that his patron, the Grand-Duke Cosmo (a descendant not of the Cosmo, "Pater Patriæ," of whose doings we have been speaking, but of his younger brother), is known to have been animated by no friendly or kindly feelings towards the other and elder branch of the family. And there is reason to believe that the testimony of history to the ill-deeds of his far-away cousins of the other branch was not disagreeable to Duke Cosmo. Ammirato, therefore, could venture without any extraordinary manifestation of moral courage to write the truth of the older Medici. Nevertheless, he seems to shun, as far as may be, the story of the arts which the first founder of the Medicean despotism employed for the suppression of constitutional liberty. And it is not difficult to understand that this part of his subject might be distasteful to the despotic monarch for whom he wrote, independently of its connection with the merits or demerits of the members of his own family.

Macchiavelli writes more independently and frankly. And I cannot do better, perhaps, than give the reader his

brief account of the constitutional changes effected by Cosmo and the Medicean party, in his own words. A.D. 1435

"The city, then, having been weeded of the enemies to the government, and of those suspected to be so, they (the dominant party) addressed themselves to the conferring of benefits on new men, for the purpose of strengthening their faction. They restored the Alberti family, and any others who had been rebels to the former government. They reduced all the *grandi*, save a very few, to the status of the *popolo*."

These *grandi*, it must be understood, were not the members of the so-called aristocratic party recently hurled from power, but the remains of the old families, who had been disfranchised because they were nobles so many years ago. These were the *grandi* with whom, it will be remembered, Rinaldo degli Albizzi had wished to form a coalition;—a measure which he had been prevented from carrying into execution by the aversion of others of his party for these representatives of an older aristocracy than their own. The reduction of them into the ranks of the *popolo* was, it will be understood, not a hostile or injurious act, but a friendly and beneficent one; and Cosmo was thus taking the step which his rival had wished to take.

"They divided among themselves the possessions of those who had been outlawed, at low prices. Besides this they fortified themselves with new laws and ordinances; and tampered anew with the purses from which the names of the magistrates were drawn, withdrawing from them the names of their enemies, and filling them with those of their friends. And taking warning from the ruin that had overtaken their adversaries, and considering that the election purses thus manipulated and corrected did not sufficiently guarantee the safety of their power, they determined that those magistrates who had the power of life and death in their hands, should be always selected from the

A.D. 1435. chiefs of their party. And with that view they determined that the magistrates charged with the superintendence of the putting of the names into the purses for drawing, together with the members of the Signory going out of office, should have the power of nominating the incoming Signory."

These magistrates were called *accoppiatori*. Whenever a revolution in the constitution was operated by means of a "parliament" of the people called together in the Piazza, and a "*balia*" or power was granted to a commission of citizens by such parliament, the "*balia*" so appointed named a certain number of "*accoppiatori*" to superintend the putting into the purses of the names favourable to the party in whose interest the revolution was accomplished. Of course, inasmuch as the Signory, desirous of making the revolution, nominated the members of the "*balia*," assented to by a crowd supposed to represent the entirety of the citizens of Florence, tumultuously gathered in the Piazza, surrounded by armed men; and inasmuch as this "*balia*" so chosen named the "*accoppiatori*," and the "*accoppiatori*" handled at their pleasure the purses containing the names to be drawn for election to all the offices, the whole thing was a clumsy mode of giving the successful revolutionists the absolute nomination to all offices, legislative as well as executive; and the conjuring trickery of it served merely to throw a certain—not very large—amount of dust into the eyes of the people. And the new and somewhat more audaciously naked proposal of the Medicean party, that the outgoing Signory, together with the "*accoppiatori*," should have the appointment of the incoming Signory, was merely a cynical simplification of the means for attaining the end required, which serves to show how strong the party must have been which could have ventured to make such a barefaced proposition.

"They gave furthermore to the Eight," continues Macchiavelli, "the power of life and death. They provided that those exiled could not return, even at the conclusion of the term of their exile, unless thirty-four out of the thirty-seven members of which the Signory and their colleagues consist, voted in favour of allowing them to do so. To write to them or to receive letters from them was prohibited; and every word, every wink, every hint, that could in any way be displeasing to the ruling party was most severely punished. And if there remained in Florence any suspected person, who had not been reached by these vexations and penalties, he was struck by the fresh taxes which they imposed. Thus in a short time, having driven from the city and impoverished the whole of the adverse party, they secured themselves in power." * A.D. 1435.

There can be very little doubt, that already Cosmo had conceived the idea of making himself—or his sons—despotic lords of Florence. It was a feat that had been performed so frequently in the numerous cities of Italy, that the temptation to try it was ever before the eyes of a powerful and prominent citizen, and all the processes and means by which the trick was done were well understood. But at least it may be said for Florence that the sleight-of-hand was not accomplished there with the rapidity with which it had been again and again performed in other cities;—that the struggle was still long, and the fall gradual. But that it had already commenced from the time of Cosmo's return, and that he had already determined to play for the highest stakes, seems clear. There is a tradition that, when some one of his friends remonstrated with Cosmo on the desolation brought upon the city by so many banishments and deaths, and the ruin of so many of its worthy citizens, he replied

* Macchiavelli, lib. v. ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 13.

A.D. 1435. that a city ruined was better than a city lost; and that there was no need to be alarmed about the loss of worthy citizens, for that he could make as many such as he needed with a couple of yards of red cloth—alluding to the gown which was the distinguishing costume of a substantial and worshipful citizen.*

Such a purpose as that, which, there can be little doubt, Cosmo had already conceived, was of course aided and forwarded as much by the illegal violence of his equally unconstitutional adversaries as by his own. The former caused those proscriptions, which left the Commonwealth at the mercy of the Medicean faction to seem to the Florentine mind the natural and inevitable result of reasonable retaliation. "They,—the Medici, Cosmo, and the other members of his family,—'remained in exile a twelvemonth,' says genial gossiping Giovanni Cambi,† and they avenged themselves with an overflowing measure; for revenges are always greater than the original offence, as may be seen by what followed, when twenty families were banished by the Medici for every one that had suffered with them."

But Cambi, and his fellow-citizens with him (for he is an excellent specimen of the average Florentine citizen of the time), perceived clearly enough the tendency of the state

* See the Dialogue between Bernardo del Nero and his friends, written by the historian Guicciardini, a friend of the Medici, and printed in the second volume of the "Inedited works of Francesco Guicciardini" by Signor Canestrini, Florence, 1858. There Piero Capponi is made, in his long recapitulation of the evils worked in Florence by the Medici, to specify "the exaltation of an infinite number of ignoble families, and the admission to the citizenship of Florence of plebeians and inhabitants of the extramural territory of the republic, and, when he (Cosmo) was compelled to supply the place of the nobles banished or otherwise destroyed, the tyrannical investiture of ignoble plebeians with the scarlet-dyed cloth of St. Martin." At "St. Martin's", in Florence was a manufactory of this costly scarlet cloth.

† Deliz. degli Erud. Tosc. tom. xx. p. 193.

of things in Florence, and read the signs of the times very correctly. Some citizens had been condemned to death, and given into the custody of the Podestà for execution. But their wives got access to the Pope in the monastery of Santa Maria Novella, and entreated him to intercede for the lives of the condemned men. Pope Eugenius did intercede—not, as it would seem, with the Signory, but with the Podestà, who had the men in his custody,—so effectually, that that officer gave them up into the hands of the Pope's officers. Whereupon the government deposed and dismissed the Podestà, and decreed that no person of his family should ever again be eligible as Podestà in Florence. "Whence it may be seen," says Cambi, speaking doubtless the general public opinion of the day, "that tyranny was beginning in Florence;"—a remark noticeable alike for the correctness of its conclusion, and for the insensibility to legality, which marks the premises from which that conclusion is deduced. The case would be accurately paralleled in our own time and country, if the sheriff were to liberate from Newgate a man condemned to death, either out of respect for the intercession of somebody, who had no authority whatever in the matter, or because he himself considered him to have been unduly committed and condemned. There are few Englishmen, who would fail to perceive, however much they might agree in the opinion that the man was improperly or illegally condemned, that the sheriff, who should take upon himself to liberate him, would be most properly held responsible and punished. And it needs but a little reflection to understand how important, and indeed how indispensable, the education in legality, which makes the judgment above-described seem to every Englishmen the merest alphabet of the principles of all social polity, is to the success of a scheme of self-government. The Florentine could not perceive this. He saw only, that the men were condemned to die by the

A.D. 1433.

A.D. 1435. violence of party hatred; and that the party which desired their death were strong enough, and determined enough to avenge the baulking of their wish by the deposition and dismissal of the Podestà. In these facts he saw signs of the commencement of tyranny in Florence;—justly enough. What he could not see, and what it was of the last importance that he should see, was that the Signory did right when they dismissed the Podestà, and wrong when they condemned illegally;—that the former act was in its nature preservative against tyranny, and the latter, the genuine sign of its approach.

Tyranny,—that *governo di un solo*, which it had been the whole scope and main object of the constitution and political existence of Florence to provide against, was indeed assuredly approaching; but the city continued to be improved in material beauty and embellishment, as cities are always seen to be in the early days of that mode of government. "On the 12th of June, 1434," writes Cambi,* "they finished the closing of the larger circle of the cupola,† built without any scaffolding; and now, they are setting about placing and building above it the lantern of white marble, with a golden ball on the top of it, and above that the cross; the whole designed and arranged by the noble architect, Filippo di Ser Brunellesco, the goldsmith and citizen of Florence."

And notwithstanding the coming tyranny, and the party bitterness and the hard times, there were still cakes and ale in Florence in various shapes. On the 10th of November, 1435, the Conte Francesco Sforza arrived there from his successful campaign in Romagna and Umbria; and the city excelled itself in its gay doings in his honour. A few months previously it had buried with an almost equal amount of pomp another of its generals,

* *Op. cit.* p. 188. † Of the cathedral.

Niccolò da Tolentino, who had died, in all probability by unfair means, while a prisoner in the hands of Filippo-Maria Visconti; and "more than three thousand pounds of wax went in the honouring of him." * And now, surely a living lion was worth more than a dead one. Sforza brought with him three hundred horses, and seventy men-at-arms, "in all respects well and richly appointed." † And all expenses for himself and his suite were defrayed by the city from the moment of his setting foot on the territory of the Commonwealth, after the usual custom of the Florentines in the case of those whom the city wished to honour. The great general was presented to the Pope and to the Signory, and received rich presents from both, as also from the board of Captains of the Guelph party. On the 15th of November a grand festival and ball was given on the Piazza della Signoria, "with jousting fair and honourable." And on the next day, a tournament was held on the Piazza di Santa Croce, "with helmets and lances," in which all the seventy men-at-arms in the General's suite rode, and "a prize of velvet," which cost an hundred and twenty golden florins, was given by the city. And on the 25th the great man departed, "highly contented with the Pope and the Florentines, and full of thanks and fine offers. And the expense to the Commonwealth amounted, upon my word, to four thousand golden florins." ‡ A.D. 1435

The next month brought the Florentines the best bit of news that had reached the city for a long time. Genoa had suddenly and successfully risen in rebellion, and had thrown off the yoke of the Duke of Milan. "On the 30th of December we heard from Pisa, that Genoa had rebelled against the Duke, and restored itself to liberty; and Messer Obizzino, the Duke's governor, was at two o'clock cut into

* Cambi, *op. cit.* p. 203.

† Ricordi di Giovanni Morelli, Deliz. degli Erud. Tosc. tom. xix. p. 141.

‡ *Ibid.*

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A.D. 1436. pieces. Amen!" Such are the brief but significant terms in which the contemporary chronicler Morelli records the event.

The new year brought with it fresh holiday-making for the holiday-loving Florentines. The vast church, which nearly a century and a half ago,* the Florentines had ordered to be built on a scale of grandeur such that "nothing more great or magnificent could be invented by human effort or industry,"† had lately, as has been mentioned, been nearly finished. And it was considered that it was now sufficiently near completion to permit of its being consecrated with propriety; — especially as the presence of a Pope in Florence offered a very desirable opportunity for the performance of the ceremony with the greatest pomp and magnificence. Pope Eugenius was well pleased to perform this stroke of his profession for his hospitable hosts; and on the appropriate day of the Annunciation of the Virgin, which at that time was the first day of the Florentine year, the formal dedication of the cathedral took place. A closed passage was erected from the chief door of the church of Santa Maria Novella to the great western entrance of the new church, passing through the church of St. John the Baptist, at a height of two braccia—nearly four feet—from the ground. This was richly carpeted throughout its entire length,—nearly half a mile probably,—and adorned with tapestry, and damask silk hangings, and flowers, &c. Through this gallery,—which seems to have been contrived for the sake of preventing the Pope from being incommoded by the crowd, at the cost of shutting out the people from a sight of the ecclesiastical braveries in a manner very unusual among the providers of church shows in Roman Catholic

* A.D. 1294.

† Richa. Notizie Istoriche delle Chiese Fiorentine, Firenze, 1757, vol. vi. p. 14.

countries,—the Pontiff proceeded, accompanied by seven cardinals, thirty-seven archbishops and bishops, and by all the ambassadors of the different powers, of whom there were a great number then resident in Florence; and as soon as he arrived at the cathedral, "set about consecrating the principal altar with the most exquisite ceremonies according to the usages of the Roman church, while the Cardinal Orsini, who was also in full costume, mounted on a ladder and anointed the walls, and so with similar ceremonies completed the consecration of the entire church."* This "exquisite" performance occupied five hours. Then the Gonfaloniere Davanzati was knighted in the Pope's presence, the Pontiff himself fastening the clasp of the knightly mantle on his breast with his own holy hand, an honour, "the like to which," as the Florentine chronicles relate, "was never paid to any other citizen."† Next the Pope ordered the Cardinal of Venice to say high mass on the newly-consecrated altar, at the conclusion of which His Holiness conceded a most magnificent quantity of indulgences to all who should on the anniversary of that day for ever, hear high mass at that altar. And then they all went to dinner in the Palazzo Pubblico, where the Signory were the hosts of all the reverend and noble company. The entire series of ceremonies must have occupied at least eight hours; and it will be admitted that His Holiness had that day earned his dinner;—as well as the compliment of being requested to name fourteen prisoners from among all those then in the prisons of the Commonwealth, for pardon and liberation. A.D. 1436.

But while Florence was thus disporting itself with holidays and spectacles, sacred and profane, the exiles, who were shut out from their part in all these things by the recent change in position of Florentine parties, were busily

* Ammirato, lib. xx. Gonf. 869. † *Ibid.*

A.D. 1436. engaged in endeavouring to make the political events of other parts of the peninsula furnish the means of opening for themselves a path of return to their city. It was the old game;—the game which had been continually played in all parts of Italy for so many generations;—which showed in the clearest light all the fatal dangers arising from the wholesale proscription of the citizens of Italian cities by their political adversaries, but which, despite the clearness of its unmistakeable warnings, had failed to teach Italian parties the value and prudence of moderation.

No sooner had Genoa recovered its liberty, than Venice and Florence, very naturally and properly, made alliance with their sister republic. Of course this excited not only the anger but the fears of Filippo-Maria Visconti. And Rinaldo degli Albizzi saw in this state of things an opportunity, which induced him to hurry to Milan. His business there was simply to persuade the Duke to make war on his native country, to promise him all the open aid which the exiles could furnish towards the enterprise, and all that secret treason, and the connection existing between them and their friends still remaining in Florence could accomplish towards delivering the city into his hands. Of course Albizzi and those who acted with him, were perfectly well aware that they were proposing to sacrifice for the sake of securing their own return to their homes, everything which, according to the political creed they had always professed to hold, rendered that home valuable or desirable. As long as Florence had existed, war to the knife against feudal tyranny had been the law of her existence. At the cost of unceasing effort and persistent determination, of the kind only inspired by the over-ruling influence of a fixed and master idea, she had banished that form of social polity from central Italy. At the cost of unparalleled sacrifices of treasure and prosperity, she had striven successfully for many generations to withstand the encroach-

ment of the powerful tyrannies existing in Lombardy. To do so was for Florence more than a traditional polity. It was a passion,—a master passion; and had been thus far the law of her being. The anti-Medicean and so-called aristocratic party, at the head of which Rinaldo degli Albizzi now was, professed in their private conferences among themselves, that the object of their endeavours, the scope of their party action, was the salvation of the Commonwealth from the danger of falling under the "*governo di un solo*,"—the rule of a sovereign. Their determination to get rid of Cosmo de' Medici by any means and at all hazards, was justified by this necessity. In the important conversation that took place between Rinaldo himself and Niccolo da Uzzano, it has been seen, that this was the language held, and these the principles professed. But now, here is this same Rinaldo, as soon as ever a turn in that wheel of fortune, which was so constantly whirling in Florence, has placed *him* in exile, and his adversaries in the ascendant, eagerly plotting the subjection of his native city not only to a despot, but to a foreign despot;—not only to a tyrant, in the technical mediæval sense of the word, but to a tyrant of the worst description and most infamous reputation. A.D. 1430.

For there can be no mistake about the intended upshot of the intrigue in which Rinaldo was engaged at Milan. There was no possibility of any illusion on his part, when he betook himself to Milan, to persuade Filippo-Maria Visconti that now was the golden opportunity for making war upon Florence. The successful prosecution of his scheme would have replaced him and his friends in their Florentine palaces; but it would have placed them there as the subjects of a despotic prince;—the favoured subjects doubtless, the holders of office, monopolisers of honours, wielders of backstairs influence, with unlimited indulgence in the exquisitely dear delight of persecuting, oppressing,

A.D. 1436. excluding and triumphing over those who had once been their equals and their opponents. This was the prize that Albizzi and his party played for!

Were all the professions and the arguments used by the party utterly hypocritical then? Was the horror and loathing they expressed at the idea that a Florentine citizen might vault into a throne, and place a yoke upon the necks of his fellow-citizens, all pretence and falsehood? By no means; very far from it. Albizzi would probably have liked to become, and possibly may have dreamed of becoming, sovereign lord of Florence himself. Failing any such result of the party struggles in the Commonwealth, he would doubtless have been well contented that things should remain as they had been during all his life, with his own political party in the ascendant. But if neither the one nor the other of these things could be, then come war, destruction, slavery to a foreign despot,—*anything*, rather than the exaltation to princely power, or even the political ascendency of a rival citizen. This was the one thing, that no Florentine could brook;—that one of his own fellows should come to be king over him!

To the student of any portion of the history of mankind the general contemporary estimation of any act or line of conduct is a far more important object of consideration than the mere actions themselves of any one man, however eminent. And in the case of the black treason of which Rinaldo degli Albizzi was thus guilty, the gravest aspect of the matter, as a symptom of the social condition of the Florentine community, and as a means of tracing the true connection of that social condition with subsequent events in their normal relationship of cause and effect, is to be found in the general tone of the sentiment with which the act was viewed by his fellow-citizens. Now it is an ominous, and to an English reader quite a startling fact, that among all the chroniclers, gossiping diarists, and

graver historians, who have between them preserved for us the form and aspect of that time, no word of reprobation or moral indignation is to be found for an act such as would in our history have been handed down to a doom of infamy in all coming ages. Cavalcanti, Morelli, Cambi, Neri Capponi, do not even mention the fact of Albizzi's treasonable intrigue at Milan. But wherever they do speak of Rinaldo, he is always mentioned with respect as a noble and accomplished cavalier. Macchiavelli, from whom at least some more moral estimate might have been expected, mentions the circumstance as simply as he might have done any the most matter-of-fact transaction. Nor is this absence of remark occasioned by any desire for brevity on the part of the Florentine Tacitus. For he gives three octavo pages full of the speech in which Rinaldo urged, or is supposed by the historian to have urged, the Duke of Milan to make war on Florence. And at a subsequent page, when speaking of the end of Rinaldo's life, Macchiavelli writes of him as "a man who was truly respected in adversity as well as in prosperity."* But the fact was, that the uniform practice of the exiles from Italian cities had for generations past made it appear quite a matter of course that they should be ready to use all and any means whatsoever for the reversal of the fortune which had made them exiles from their homes, and placed their adversaries in the ascendant in their native city. Doubtless Albizzi would have been condemned as a traitor to the existing government in Florence, and would have paid for his treason with his life, if he had fallen into the hands of his enemies in the city. They would have put him to death with the satisfaction arising from the gratification of personal hatred. But no more sentiment of moral and patriotic indignation would have been felt than a man feels when he check-mates his adversary at chess. A.D. 1436.

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 75.

A.D. 1436. No more ominous symptom than such a state of public feeling can well be imagined, of the total absence of that virtue, without a certain minimum of which, according to the parable in Holy Writ, no city can be saved. In such a condition of debauched public sentiment we see at its fatal work the poison generated by that egotistic individualism which prized liberty only as a personal good, and had never learned to value it as a necessary atmosphere indispensable for the well-being of all men. From that narrow and jealous love of liberty, which excluded all care for the liberty of others, grew the unforbearing violence of Italian party hatred. From that violence spring the unceasing proscriptions which made the "*fuorusciti*," or exiles from the different cities, a standing and most important element in all Italian political and social action. From the constant existence of a body of men so circumstanced, and from the tone of their habitual feeling towards the cities which had driven them out from their homes, arose the corrupted state of public feeling which could look upon such conduct as that of Rinaldo degli Albizzi without horror and loathing. Thus that congenital vice, the presence of which was noted in the earliest developments of the Florentine political system,—that selfishness which could never learn that liberty is an impossible condition for any community, save one of which the members love freedom for others as well as for themselves, was rapidly preparing the catastrophe towards which Florence began visibly to advance even from the early days of her robust infancy, and pointing the most important moral of the story which tells the rise, decline, and fall of her Republic.

CHAPTER IV.

The Visconti well inclined to listen to the exiles—Piccinino sent by him to reduce Genoa—Fails to do so—Pope Eugenius at Bologna—Endeavours to make peace—Failure of his efforts—Piccinino advances to the neighbourhood of Lucca—and Sforza is opposed to him on behalf of the Republics—Desultory warfare—Piccinino routed by Sforza near Barga—Piccinino recalled to Lombardy—Florence again attacks Lucca—The Lucchese hard pressed send to Visconti for help—Cosmo goes to Venice to stir up the enmity of the Senate towards the Duke—Conditions demanded by the Venetians—Sforza's pretensions to the hand of Bianca Visconti—Agreement between Sforza and the Duke that the former was not to cross the Po—Florence endeavours to take in both Sforza and Venice—Fails—Sforza refuses to cross the Po—and at the request of the Duke refuses to operate any further against Lucca—between which and Florence peace is made in 1438—Disappointment of the Florentines—Filippo-Maria Visconti prepares for war again—He attacks Venice—which unwillingly asks aid of Florence—Florence accedes—And she and Venice hire Sforza between them—Piccinino marches into Romagna—approaches Florence—and passes into the Casentino—and overruns the whole district—Town of Poppi—Treason of its Signor—Great battle of Anghiari—Florentine victory—Ruin of the Count of Poppi—Private cause of enmity between him and Cosmo de' Medici.

Filippo-Maria Visconti was well enough inclined to listen to the suggestions of the Florentine exiles. But suffering still from the exhaustion of the last war, and warned by the disastrous termination of it, he for some time hesitated, and was at last persuaded to nibble at the bait hung out to him in a cautious and tentative manner.

Immediately on the outburst of the rebellion in Genoa he had sent Piccinino thither with as many troops as he could gather together on the spur of the moment to attempt the putting down of the insurrection, and the

A.D. 1436 reduction of the rebellious city to obedience. Piccinino succeeded in driving into the city the Genoese who held the mountains around it; but he was unable to make any impression upon the city itself. And things stood thus when the Duke, yielding to the instigations of Albizzi and his brother exiles, sent orders to Piccinino to give up for the present all attempt to reduce Genoa, and to advance along the coast southwards, doing what mischief he could to the friends and allies of Florence by the way, and when he had reached the neighbourhood of Pisa, to demand permission for his troops to pass into the kingdom of Naples, under the pretence that the object of his expedition was to assist the King of Arragon in his contest for that crown against Réné of Anjou.

The Pope meanwhile had left Florence on the 18th of April, 1436; and having gone to Bologna, was there engaged in endeavouring to make peace once more between the League—*i.e.*, Florence, Venice, Genoa, and himself—and the Duke of Milan; representing specially that if peace were not made, he should be obliged to permit his General, Francesco Sforza (now Gonfaloniere of the Church, and the Pope's faithful soldier, since he was duly invested with the sovereignty of the states he had stolen from the Holy Father), to become the Captain-general of the forces of the League. It may be supposed that Duke Filippo laughed a little in his sleeve at this pretension of his Holiness to dispose of the services of Francesco Sforza at his pleasure. Duke Philip knew very well that the question on which side in the coming strife the great Captain would be found, would depend altogether on that noble cavalier's sense of his own interest.

At all events the Pope's well-intentioned efforts were vain. The Duke of Milan was willing to make peace if the other members of the league would abandon Genoa, and suffer him to reduce her to her previous condition of

subjection. The two other Republics, Florence and Venice, were willing to make peace only on the understanding that the freedom and independence of Genoa should be confirmed and recognized. So Niccolò Piccinino advanced in October, 1436, at the head of the Milanese forces into the neighbourhood of Lucca, and Francesco Sforza took command of the troops of the leagued Republics to oppose him. And Neri Capponi, the son of the Gino Capponi whom we have seen holding a similar office in the former war, and who has continued his father's "Commentaries" in a record of his own services,* was with the Florentine army as Commissary of the Republic. A.D. 1436.

The strife thus commenced followed the ordinary course of these miserable, incessant, and—as Macchiavelli well calls them—cowardly wars. The invading troops overran the country, harrying farms and homesteads, attacking small outlying and unprotected villages, and isolated fortresses, and achieving easy and inglorious successes at the expense of a vast amount of suffering to the unfortunate inhabitants of the district. For a while Sforza and the troops under him remained inactive witnesses of these ravages—"out of respect for the Pope."† His Holiness, as has been said, was in Bologna endeavouring futilely to arrange the terms of a peace; and it was considered disrespectful towards him to take any active steps for the protection of the country from Piccinino's troopers, while these negotiations were in progress.

At last, encouraged by a series of such smaller successes, the Milanese troops attacked Barga, a small town in the mountains to the north of Lucca.‡ Thereupon Sforza,—

* Printed by Muratori in the eighteenth volume of the Script. Rer. Ital.

† Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 24.

‡ Barga, most picturesquely situated among lovely scenery on a high hill overhanging the valley of the Lima, and well known to the numerous English tourists who pass their summer at the Baths of Lucca, is the native

A.D. 1437. whether deeming that the increasing audacity of the enemy rendered further waiting on the Papal negotiations impossible, or having learned that nothing was to be expected from them, is not clear,—followed Piccinino into the mountains, brought him to an engagement in the valley beneath Barga, and entirely routed him.

Meanwhile the Venetians, as soon as they learned from these doings of the Milanese, that they were to consider themselves once again at war with the Visconti, sent their General Giovanni Francesco Gonzaga into the Milanese territory in Lombardy to do as Piccinino was doing in Tuscany. And this, together with the defeat sustained at the hands of Sforza, made it necessary for the Duke to recall his troops northwards for the protection of his own dominions. "And this recall, together with the victory obtained over Niccolò (Piccinino), gave the Florentines courage to undertake the enterprise of Lucca, with the hope of acquiring it; and relieved them from all fear or scruple in the prosecution of the same, seeing that the Duke, of whom alone they were afraid, was engaged with the Venetians, and that the Lucchese had no ground whatever for complaint, inasmuch as they had received the enemies of Florence into their territory, and had permitted them thence to attack Florentine subjects."*

Notwithstanding all that had come and gone, despite the long series of ever-recurring misfortunes, which the passionate desire to make themselves masters of Lucca had caused to the Florentines, in the teeth of all the severe lessons which had been the sole results of their reiterated attempts to despoil a neighbour city of that which they valued so highly for themselves, the conquest of Lucca was still the dearest object of Florentine ambition.

place of almost all the Italian makers and vendors of plaster-of-Paris casts who abound in London.

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 24.

And it was especially a darling project with Cosmo, whether with the long-sighted ambition of rounding the dominion of which he already hoped that his descendants would one day be the sovereigns, or as a means of increasing his popularity with the Florentines, and confirming and consolidating his ever increasing power in the city. A.D. 1437

So Piccinino and his army having been got rid of by their recall northwards, Sforza with his troops in the pay of Florence was instructed to undertake the conquest of Lucca. And he forthwith began the work *secundum artem* in the usual way. The army secured the Lucchese territory, gaining a series of easy successes over a number of small townlets and villages, but in fact doing nothing that could materially conduce to the reduction of the city itself. Towards the end of May, 1437, the army, flushed with these glorious victories, marched towards Lucca. "They destroyed all the crops and grain, they burned the country houses, they cut down the vines and the trees, they drove off the cattle, nor did they leave undone anything of any sort which can be done, and is ordinarily done against an enemy."*

But the city was well provisioned and well defended; and the Lucchese were determined to hold it to the last. Their only fear was that the lowest classes of the citizens, when they began to feel the sufferings which a long siege would necessarily entail on them, might rise in rebellion against the governing class, and insist on submission to the enemy. A public meeting of the citizens was called therefore; and a speech addressed to them, which Macchiavelli reports, or gives the substance of in his own language, at length. The orator recalled to the remembrance of his hearers all the many occasions on which the courage and constancy of their fathers had under Heaven

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 24.

A.D. 1437. baffled the greed of the Florentines, and pointed out that on more than one of these occasions, Lucca had been far less well prepared, and the general prospect far blacker than at present. He added all that could stir the hearts of his audience to hatred against the proud and overbearing Florentines, who could not be content with their own prosperity without desiring to destroy that of a weaker neighbour, innocent of all offence against them. And at the conclusion of the harangue, every man present solemnly swore to defend the city to the last drop of his blood.

The best hope of the Lucchese, however, lay in the possibility of inducing the Duke of Milan to undertake their defence. And the ambassadors sent to him by the city for this purpose found him not unwilling to listen to their entreaties. For in fact it by no means suited his views, that Florence should receive such an accession of strength, as would have accrued to her from the conquest of Lucca, or that the latter city, the situation of which made it so very convenient a means and base of hostile operations against Tuscany, should lose that independence, which both politically and strategically was so available a weapon against Florence.

The Duke was well inclined, therefore, to send the Lucchese the assistance they needed. But he was hampered by the attacks of the Venetians in Lombardy; and the Florentines, who had little or no hope of prosecuting the enterprise against Lucca to a successful issue, if their besieging force should be attacked by the Ducal army, felt that their hopes depended on inducing the Venetians to prosecute their hostilities against Visconti in Lombardy so briskly, as to make it impossible for him to spare any men for the protection of Lucca.

With this view Cosmo himself undertook an expedition to Venice. It has been seen how highly-esteemed he was

in that city; and he hoped that his influence might obtain from his friends among the Venetian senators what they might be unwilling to concede to another diplomatist. But it may well be, that the remembrance of all the highly-flattering honours which Venice had paid to him during the period of his banishment, blinded Cosmo to the probability that Venetian senators might look with very different eyes on the Medicean exile, and on the same man at the head of the Florentine Republic. At all events Cosmo returned without having succeeded to more than a very imperfect degree in the object of his mission. A.D. 1437.

The Venetians demanded as an indispensable condition to the prosecution of the war in Lombardy by them that Sforza should be sent to take the command of their armies. Now this was a condition that it was extremely difficulty to comply with; and the difficulties attending it are curiously illustrative of the position held in the political and social system of mediæval Italy by those princely free-lance captains, and of the considerations by which their conduct was regulated.

Filippo-Maria Visconti had no legitimate children. But he had an illegitimate daughter named Bianca. Now this Bianca married to an ordinary man among the nobles of her father's court would have been a personage of no importance whatsoever, and history would have had but little to say about her. But married to such a man as Francesco Sforza the case was very different. To him such a marriage, in the absence of legitimate heirs to the greatness of the house of Visconti, opened a brilliant vista of possibilities and probabilities; and of course the Duke, Bianca's father, was equally well aware of the value of the prize he had in his gift. He was so strongly impressed with this, that he found great difficulty in making up his mind to give it out and out. To him the most

A.D. 1437. profitable use that could be made of his homely-featured* daughter, was to keep her as long as might be dangling before the eyes of the powerful soldier of fortune as a prize almost within his grasp. "He (the Duke) continually was negotiating the marriage of Bianca with Sforza, according to the promises given him. Thrice already the betrothal had been celebrated; and the matter had been carried so far that the bridal dresses had been cut out, and twice the invitations to the wedding had been issued. And the Duke had invited the persons to wait on her, and paid to the Count (Sforza) about thirty thousand ducats of the dowry promised, to make him believe that he was in earnest. So that the Count thought that he had really got her. But at last he found himself tricked; although the affair was not finally broken off." †

It may seem strange to our notions of such matters that Sforza, having these views with regard to the house of Visconti, should not have ranged himself permanently and entirely on the Duke's side in the continual quarrels of the period. But such a course would have circumscribed too much his opportunities of making profit out of all the good things going in his line of business. It would have been as unreasonable, as for a gentleman, who was about to give his daughter to a leading Queen's counsel, to stipulate that his proposed son-in-law should never hold a brief against any friend of his. And it doubtless was not convenient for the Duke to keep always in his own pay a

* See the portrait in Litta, Cel. Fam. Ital. Visconti family.

† Commentarii di Neri Capponi, Rer. Ital. Script. tom. xviii. p. 1187. Sforza did eventually "get her," the marriage taking place in 1441. The Venetian historiographer Marcantonio Sabellico writes of the Duke of Milan's conduct in this matter as follows: "Fuerat Philippus magnâ parte hyemis illius Sforciam ludificatus, quod Biancam filiam ex fœdere, ut diximus, factam, neque dabat petenti, neque daturum se negabat; nunc puellæ valitudinem, nunc hyemis inclementiam causando rem de industriâ in longum trahere." Degli Istorici delle Cose Veneziane i quali hanno scritto per pubblico decreto, tomo primo, p. 589. In Venezia, 1718.

general whose pretensions were as high as those of Sforza. Besides which he seems, every time the Duke baulked and disappointed him, to have gone off in a fit of anger to join Visconti's enemies. A.D. 1437.

Just at the time now in question,—when Sforza was with the Florentine troops besieging Lucca in the autumn of 1437,—he had been led into the service of the Duke's enemies by circumstances of paramount importance to him. It has been seen how he had first seized and then acquired a legal title to a principality in the States of the Church, at the cost of becoming reconciled to the Pope, and assuming the command of his Holiness's forces as Gonfaloniere of the Church. That position had made the Florentines, who were the Pope's allies, his friends, and had embarked him in their cause. But notwithstanding all this, there was an agreement between the Duke and Sforza, the object of which was to prevent the latter from coming into too immediately hostile collision with his hoped-for father-in-law. The terms of this agreement were that he, Sforza, should not cross the Po, to fight against Milan in Lombardy. This understanding was perfectly well-known both to the Florentines and the Venetians. And hence the difficulty in the demands made by Venice, as the only terms on which they could keep alive the war against the Duke. Hence also, no doubt, the determination of Venice to insist on this point, either because she desired to ask what Florence could not grant, or because she hoped that by the granting of it, a final breach might be made between the Duke, and the great general.

In this difficulty, the shrewd grey-bearded junta of old bankers and merchants, who sat in their gilded chamber high up in the Palazzo Vecchio in the centre of Florence, as if looking out over all the wide-spread web of plans and policy which they were ever weaving in every part of

D. 1437. Italy, sending out ambassadors, messengers, and letters, and receiving these every day, and almost every hour of every day, had recourse to a little—diplomacy, we will say. They persuaded Sforza to write them a letter, promising to cross the Po in the service of the Venetians, pointing out to him that a private letter could not be considered any breach of a public engagement, and that nothing would make it necessary for him to keep the promise so made; but that the Venetians, when they had once got into war with the Duke, would be obliged to go on with it. To the Venetians they represented, hurrying to them with the letter thus obtained, that it must be held to bind Sforza absolutely and in honour to cross the Po, that he was entirely at their disposition, and that the conditions which the Senate had insisted on were all granted.*

On this understanding Sforza marched northwards from Lucca, in October, 1437,† crossed the Apennines, and came as far as Reggio. But there he stopped. And the Florentines soon found that in attempting to take in the Venetian Senate they had met somewhat more than their match. At Reggio, Sforza found Andrea Mauroceno, a representative of the ubiquitous power of Venice, who very unmistakably intimated to him, that if he intended to enter into the service of Venice he must in the first place and without any delay absolutely cross the Po, and not merely say he would do it. This Sforza would not do; and there were high words ‡ between him and the Venetian representative; the result of which was that Mauroceno returned to Venice, and Sforza marched back again into Tuscany.

The Florentines having thus altogether failed in their

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 31.

† Commentarii di Neri Capponi, Rer. Ital. Script. tom. xviii. p. 1187.

‡ "Parole injuriose."—Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 31.

object of inducing Venice to push the war actively against the Duke in Lombardy, wished to employ Sforza on his return to Tuscany in resuming the siege of Lucca. But the Duke having heard of Sforza's refusal to cross the Po,—or more probably fearing that he might be induced to do so, had once again held out hopes of the marriage which Sforza was so anxious to conclude, and had coupled the renewed offer of these hopes with the expression of a wish that the general would find the means of saving Lucca from the danger that threatened her. Sforza therefore declined to take any part in further operations against the Lucchese; and the result was, that "the enterprise of Lucca," as the Florentine historians call this unscrupulous attempt at invasion and spoliation, had to be abandoned, and to be added to the curiously long list of failures, in which all the attempts of Florence against this neighbour republic had resulted during so many generations. And peace was accordingly once more made between the two cities, on the 28th of April, 1438.* A.D. 1438.

"And thereupon they (the Florentines) filled all Italy with letters full of lamentations, saying that since neither God nor men had been willing that the Lucchese should come under their dominion, they had made peace with them. And it has rarely happened that anybody has been so unhappy about losing his own property, as the Florentines were at not having obtained possession of that of others;" †—with which remark, strange enough in the mouth of a Secretary of the Republic, Macchiavelli dismisses the subject.

It had thus gone very much against the grain with the Florentines to make this peace with Lucca. The lowest orders of the people in Florence had been especially opposed to it. But there had been no help for it, since

* Commentarii di Neri Capponi, Rer. Ital. Script. tom. xviii. p. 1187.

† Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 34.

A.D. 1439. Sforza was determined that so it should be. He, "seeing," as Cavalcanti says, "that our purses were empty, and deeming that it was more for his greatness to shear the wool than to skin the sheep, thought proper while waiting till our wool should have grown again, to make a disgraceful peace between us and the Lucchese." * The phrases are curiously suggestive of the sense the citizens of Florence had of the nature of the connection between them and the soldiers of fortune employed by them to fight their battles, and of the consciousness that they were pillaged in the conduct of their wars, even at the very time that they were grumbling at the forced discontinuance of them.

Such being the state of matters, however, and such the pleasure of their great general, it seemed at the opening of 1439, at which time Cosmo again accepted the office of Gonfaloniere, that there was some prospect of peace. But it very soon became evident that such was not to be the case. The Duke of Milan, having ensured the forbearance at any rate, if not the active co-operation, of Sforza by persuading him that he really was about to give him his daughter, and thinking, that the disagreement between the Florentines and the Venetians in that matter of Sforza's refusal to pass the Po, had sufficiently exasperated either city against the other, to preclude the possibility of their joining together against him just at present, conceived the idea that now was his moment to recover from the Venetians the cities of Brescia and Bergamo, the loss of which had been a most grievous thorn in his side, and a serious diminution of his prestige and power.

For a while Venice endeavoured to hold her own against the Duke by her own unassisted strength. She was very unwilling to become a petitioner to Florence for assistance,

* Cavalcanti, *op. cit.* lib. xi. vol. ii. p. 30.

after the irritating words that had passed between the two communities at their recent rupture. But things were going against the Venetians. The Marchese Gonzaga of Mantua, who had been their ally, and their general, suddenly deserted them, and leagued himself with the Visconti. The districts around Verona and Brescia were entirely occupied by the Duke's forces, and these two cities were so hardly pressed that their capitulation was expected from day to day. Under these circumstances the proud Senate found itself obliged to ask the alliance and aid of Florence and of Sforza. And their overtures were received by the former in a more friendly spirit than they expected, or than, as Macchiavelli says, their late conduct deserved.* "So much more powerful," he adds, "was hatred of their old enemy in the minds of the Florentines, than resentment against the friend who had slighted them." As to Sforza, the Venetians pointed out to him that fear of him alone had led the Duke to promise him his daughter, and that only the continuance of that fear would induce him to keep his promise. Sforza, persuaded by these arguments, and disgusted with the evasions and shuffling of the Duke, accepted the terms offered him,—nine thousand ducats a month from Venice, and eight thousand four hundred from Florence,†—and became general-in-chief of the renewed league against Milan. Thus the year 1440 opened with all northern and central Italy once more in a state of war. Niccolò Piccinino, as usual, was the principal commander of the Duke's forces. A.D. 1440

The war began in the usual way. Piccinino crossing the Apennines, that divide the northern portion of Romagna from Tuscany, entered the wide and rich valley of the Sieve, that fertile district which, lying to the northward of the range of hills that shuts in the Valdarno; and bounds

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 41.

† Commentarii di Neri Capponi, Rer. Ital. Script. tom. xviii. p. 1188.

A.D. 1440. the view of the Florentines behind Fiesole, was then and is still called the Mugello. Scourging all this fair valley with a destruction that was not unfelt within the walls of Florence (for many of its wealthy citizens owned large possessions in the favourite and favoured Mugello), the Milanese army advanced even to the heights above Fiesole, scaring the unwarlike citizens on their sunny banks of Arno with a sight which none of that generation had ever witnessed. But there were no signs within the city of any such rising on the part of those disaffected towards the Medicean party, as the Milanese general had been led by the assurances of the "fuorusciti" to hope would occur, and throw open to him the gates of the city. The common people were enthusiastically attached to Cosmo; and the few of the upper classes, who were opposed to him, and nevertheless remained in the city, "dared not," as Ammirato says, "so much as wink." * As usual, therefore, Piccinino and his hireling troops found it more agreeable work to overrun the country, than to undertake the siege of a strong city; and the war-cloud accordingly rolled away to the southward over the Casentino,—another fertile and beautiful valley,—that of the upper Arno, with the above name of which the readers of Dante are familiar.†

Romena, a strong castle, of which the picturesque ruins are still visible among the oak and chestnut woods at the northern end of the Casentino, and the little town of Bibbiena, looking from its terraced hill over the smiling Casentino vineyards at the other extremity of the valley, were both shortly taken by the invading force. And the whole of the Casentino district was soon completely in their hands. For there was treason in the little capital of the valley. In the centre of it, about half way between Romena and Bibbiena, on the top of a strangely isolated

* Ammirato, lib. xxi. Gonf. 893.

† Comment. Neri Capponi, *loc. cit.* 1193.

hill rising abruptly to a considerable height in the middle of the valley on the bank of the infant Arno, is the little town of Poppi, with its singularly picturesque castle, half-civic town-hall, half-military donjon-keep, and its walls skirting the brow of the precipitous height on which the town stands,—walls, as valuable in the eyes of a soldier of the fifteenth, as they now are in those of a landscape artist in the nineteenth century. One Francesco da Battifolle, of the ancient and noble feudal family of the Guidi, was lord of this singularly situated town and the fertile territory around and beneath it, holding it by the title of Conte di Poppi. But, as was the case with so many other of the territorial nobles, who had succeeded in preserving their estates and lordships by consenting to hold them under not clearly defined but perfectly well understood terms, of submission to the suzerainty of the Florentine Signory, the Count of Poppi was the "*raccomandato*," of Florence, and was bound to be her loyal ally and supporter in any case of need. But the sympathies of Count Francesco da Battifolle were with the party who were "out," and hostile to the Medicean ascendancy;—with Rinaldo degli Albizzi and his friends, whose unceasing instigations had contributed much to induce Duke Filippo-Maria to renew the war with Florence. The position held by this friend to the cause at Poppi, had probably influenced Piccinino in his determination to enter the Casentino. In any case Count Francesco thought it an excellent opportunity to strike a blow for the cause of his friends; so he threw off his allegiance to Florence, cast in his lot with that of the exiles, and by opening the gates of his town and castle to the invaders, placed the whole of the Casentino in their hands. A.D. 1440

Thus far the invading army of the Milanese under Piccinino had carried all before it; but no battle had been yet fought with the Florentine army. It was commanded

A.D. 1440. by Micheletto Attendolo and Gian Paolo Orsini; the first a rising soldier of fortune, the second, a scion of one of the noblest families in Italy, but both captains of high reputation; and after much manœuvring, minutely described by Neri Capponi, who was with the army as civil commissary, these officers succeeded in bringing the enemy to battle in the small mountain-enclosed plain on the banks of the upper Tiber, which lies between Anghiari and Borgo San Sepolcro. The battle was fought on the 29th of June, 1440; and resulted in the utter defeat and rout of the Milanese army;* a victory ever since and still celebrated annually in Florence by a race of riderless horses on St. Peter's day, and by a well-attended fair at Anghiari.†

Macchiavelli, in speaking of the bloodless character of the engagements of those times, says that only one man was killed in this great battle, and he not by a wound received in fight, but from having fallen in the *mêlée*, and having been trampled to death. This statement of the Secretary's may be perhaps exaggerated. For Biondo, the Pope's secretary, to whom the exact truth must have been known, writes that sixty of the Milanese were killed, and ten on the side of the Florentines;—a result which, considering the importance of the battle, and the numbers engaged, may be deemed abundantly confirmatory of Macchiavelli's estimate of Italian warfare in the fifteenth century. Biondo also mentions that in this battle artillery was used on either side, by the discharges of which in some instances a horse and his rider were both killed by the same shot. From the minute accounts of the fight which have been preserved, it would seem that Piccinino had chosen his ground badly. and had been clearly outmanœuvred by his adversary. But we are told, that in

* Comment. Neri Capponi, *loc. cit.* p. 1195.

† Repetti. Dig. della Toscano. Voc. Anghiari.

talking of the matter subsequently, he was himself wont to take all the blame of the defeat to himself, not indeed on this ground, but on that of "his too little care for religion," in having offered battle on the festival of the holy Apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul. A.D. 1440

The result of this battle was the rapid recovery of all that Florence had lost in the Casentino, and the utter ruin of Count Francesco da Battifolle, who had so decisively committed himself by his partizanship on the losing side. On the 29th of July, Neri Capponi, who had been busily moving from place to place in the Casentino and the neighbouring hills, receiving the submission of the different castles and townlets, made his appearance at Poppi; and on the 30th, Count Francesco, finding that nothing was left him but submission, and feeling probably that he was fortunate in being let off so easily, took his final departure from his home and country, "accompanied by his family and by thirty-two horse-loads of his goods, leaving Poppi and everything else to the Communità;"* which accordingly Capponi took possession of in the name of Florence.

In fact, this Count of Poppi had well deserved a more severe retribution at the hands of the Florentines, for his conduct had been marked by very great ingratitude. When a little time previously the Pope's legate at Borgo San Sepolcro, which then formed a part of the ecclesiastical states, had made war on the Count of Poppi, and having taken from him several fortresses and outlying portions of territory, had offered them to the Republic, the Signory had given them back to him, not choosing that a chieftain long connected with Florence by ties of allegiance on the one side and protection on the other, should be despoiled to their profit.† Moreover, when it was known in Florence that Piccinino was marching into the Casentino, the

* Neri Capponi, *loc. cit.* p. 1197.

† Ammirato, lib. xxi. Conf. 893.

A.D. 1440. Signory, considering the loyalty of the Count of Poppi to be above all suspicion, had appointed him commissary for the Republic, with ample authority over all that important district.

But there seems to have been a little bit of private history at the bottom of this unlucky Count's conduct, which the historian Ammirato, wondering, as he says, at the infatuation which led him thus to rush on his ruin, had succeeded in discovering, and which is worth telling, as an illustration of the social manners of the time, and of the causes that often determined the conduct of men in the position of the Count of Poppi. Macchiavelli attributed his treason to an old friendship which had existed between him and Rinaldo degli Albizzi. But this, in Ammirato's opinion, was not sufficient to account for a line of conduct so hazardous and uncalled for as that of the Count. "At last I discovered," says the latter historian, "that there had been a special cause of enmity between him and Cosmo de' Medici. A marriage had been proposed between Cosmo's son Piero, and the Count of Poppi's daughter, one of the most virtuous, accomplished, and beautiful girls in all Tuscany." But Cosmo, moved by the representations, as it was believed, of Neri Capponi and other Florentine citizens, "who abhorred the idea of allying themselves by marriage to feudal lords and foreigners, had broken off the match."

One can perfectly well understand the feeling which induced Cosmo to yield to these representations of his fellow-citizens. It was not any special regard for the opinion of Neri Capponi, who was by no means a particular friend of the Medici, but, politically, at all events, quite the reverse. And in those days political and personal friendships and enmities were usually one and the same. Nor in all possibility did the feelings of Cosmo himself on the subject at all agree with those of his re-

monstrating fellow-citizens. There can be little doubt that A.D. 1440. he knew his own mind perfectly well, when he projected an alliance between his son and the daughter of a powerful feudal noble. And his wishes on the subject were hardly likely to have been changed by the remonstrances of those more stanch and thorough-going republicans, to whom such a marriage was abhorrent. But his prudence forbade him to neglect their objections. That ever-watchful and much-lauded prudence, any flaw or shortcoming in which might have toppled down in a day all the "greatness" which he and his father had been so long and so patiently building up, counselled him to refrain. A different line of conduct might have closed for ever all the vista of yet more brilliant greatness, which was now rapidly though still gradually and indistinctly opening itself before his eyes. Cosmo therefore determined to yield to the opinions of his fellow-citizens in this matter. In his cautious creeping on he had been led into advancing one hesitating hand a little too fast and too far. The stern republicanism of his would-be fellows and equals took the alarm instantly. And prudent Cosmo at once drew back from the hazardous move, bided his time, and married his son to Lucretia, the daughter of the worthy citizen Francesco Tornabuoni.

CHAPTER V.

Victory of Anghiari not followed up—The Duke again makes overtures for peace—He promises to give the hand of his daughter to Sforza—The Duke's negotiations with Sforza excite the suspicions of the Venetians —To remove these, Sforza actively renews the war—Armies go into winter quarters—Pope sells Borgo San Sepolcro to the Florentines—War recommences in the spring of 1441—Piccinino in a position of great advantage over Sforza near Bergamo—Wishes to bargain with the Duke for a recompense before advancing against Sforza—The Duke, indignant, instead of complying makes peace with Sforza—Signed in November, 1441—Council of Bâle—Schism between the Eastern and Western Churches—Council translated to Florence—Pope, Patriarch, and Emperor of Constantinople in Florence—The latter lodged in the houses of the Peruzzi—Remarkable assemblage of learned men at Florence—Importation of Platonism into Florence—Agreement between the Churches—Terms of it—The more permanent effects of the great meeting at Florence—Purchasers of manuscripts—Formation of Cosmo's Platonic Academy—Unchristian tendency of the new learning—Medicean advance towards despotism—Neri Capponi—Baldaccio d' Anghiari —The murder of him—Perfidy of Cosmo de' Medici—Convent founded by his widow Annalena—Cynicism with which the murder was regarded in Florence—A new "Balia" granted—Its action—Agreement between Sforza and Piccinino—Alfonso of Aragon and Renè of Anjou in Naples —Piccinino employed against Sforza by the Pope, at the instigation of Visconti, who acts thus at the request of Alfonso—Renè comes to Florence—Florentines receive him hospitably—But decline to go to war for his cause—He returns to France—Large sums advanced to Sforza by Florence—Piccinino holds a position of great advantage against Sforza —He is again prevented by the Duke from taking advantage of it—His death—Fresh war respecting Gismundo Malatesta—The Duke's treachery towards Sforza—The Venetians assail his forces in Lombardy—And defeat them—The Duke appeals to Sforza—His doubts whether he shall take the side of the Duke or of Venice—He decides in favour of the Duke—Death of Pope Eugenius—Death of the Duke Filippo-Maria Visconti.

THE Florentine arms had gained a great and important victory; but to the great disgust of the Commissaries,

they found themselves altogether powerless to follow up the advantage obtained at Anghiari to the results which might easily have been gathered from it. The ill-disciplined hireling troops, somewhat tired with their exertions, and entirely satisfied with the booty and ransom-money they had gained, utterly refused to make any attempt at pursuing the enemy. And the consequence of "this perverse system of warfare," as Macchiavelli calls it,* was, that at the simple cost of ransoming the men and horses who had been made prisoners, Piccinino was very shortly ready to take the field again, none the worse for his defeat. But the Duke, his master, had too urgent need for him and his troops nearer home, to allow him a chance of retrieving his ill-success against the Florentines, by another battle on a less irreligiously chosen day. Sforza and the Venetians had been so successfully pressing the Duke in Lombardy, while his principal general had been first over-running the Florentine territory, and then receiving a crushing defeat from the enemy, that Filippo-Maria found himself, according to Macchiavelli,† in danger of losing his Dukedom. Once again therefore he sought to make peace with the two Republics, which had ever when united proved too strong for him to hold the field against them; and he set about it in the usual manner. He sent the Marchese Niccolò di Este, of Ferrara, to Sforza, who was then at Peschiera, to point out to him that it was by no means his (Sforza's) interest that the Duke should be crushed, inasmuch as, if he were so, the Florentines and the Venetians would have no further need of him. Further, the Duke professed that he was perfectly willing to conclude the long-deferred treaty of marriage; and to prove his sincerity this time, he was ready to send his daughter to Ferrara to remain under the protection of the Marchese, with the

A.D. 1440

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 78. † *Ibid.* p. 79.

A.D. 1410. understanding that the marriage was to be solemnized as soon as peace should be concluded.

Sforza, however, had been too often deluded by similar promises to receive the Duke's overtures very graciously. He replied that if the Duke of Milan really wished for peace, he would have no difficulty in treating with the Venetians and Florentines in a regular way, as they were neither of them desirous of war;—that as for the proposed marriage, the Duke had deceived him so often, that he could put no faith in any promises of his on that subject; nevertheless, he (Sforza) would be ready, on the conclusion of peace, to do in this matter as he should be advised by his friends.

But the more immediate result of these negotiations was to excite the suspicions of the Venetians with respect to the good faith of their general. That Senate, which, as Macchiavelli remarks, was apt to be very suspicious of its military commanders, even causelessly,—and which, as he might have added, sometimes set their suspicions at rest in a very summary manner, scarcely calculated to make their service a very safe or desirable one,—was not altogether unreasonably displeased at this interchange of messages and confidences between their commander-in-chief and the enemy, conducted by means of an emissary in the confidence of the latter. And the consequence was, that Sforza, wishing to remove any such doubts of his good faith from the minds of the Venetians, pressed the war against the Duke more actively than ever.

Little of importance, however, was done during the remainder of that summer and autumn, and soon after the return of Piccinino into Lombardy the armies went into winter quarters,—Sforza at Verona, the Ducal army at Cremona, the Florentines in Tuscany, and the Papal troops in Romagna.

Short as the campaign had been, the expense of it had

pressed the Pope so hardly, that he was this winter (1440) obliged to sell Borgo San Sepolcro to the Florentines for twenty-five thousand ducats; and it has ever since remained attached to the Grand Duchy of Tuscany. A.D. 1441.

With the spring of 1441 the war began again in Lombardy as briskly as ever. The Duke had used the winter to restore the army under Piccinino to a condition of perfect efficiency, and Sforza had caused the Venetians to recall all that portion of their forces which had been co-operating with the Florentines in Tuscany during the past autumn, and to place that force under the orders of Micheletto Attendolo, whose conduct at Anghiari had favourably commended him to the veteran general's notice. And thus both generals were ready for a busy and active campaign.

But the earliest manœuvres of the campaign led to the conclusion of peace in a very singular manner. In the course of a variety of strategic movements, the object of which was the attack of Bergamo on the part of Piccinino and the Ducal forces on the one hand, and the defence of that city on the part of Sforza and the Venetians on the other, the superior tactics of Piccinino placed Sforza in such a position that a total rout of the Venetian army seemed perfectly inevitable. In this situation Piccinino, feeling that he had the destinies of the Dukedom of Milan and of Visconti in his hands, bethought himself that then or never was the moment to obtain from the Duke some solid recognition of his services. In truth he had seen other soldiers of fortune his contemporaries, who had neither been more successful in the field than he, nor had been entrusted with the conduct of more important wars, or the guardianship of larger political interests, carving out for themselves and their descendants principalities and states, while he, as he reminded the Duke, had not yet acquired land enough to make a grave for himself. It was

A.D. 1441. true also that Piccinino had served the Duke with greater constancy than any one of the leading captains his rivals had shown to any of the causes to which they had attached themselves. So now, pausing ere he struck the blow which seemed about to annihilate the Venetian army, and restore the Duke of Milan to all the possessions which the fortune of war had taken from him, he intimated to Filippo-Maria that he should like to know before going any further what the Duke meant to do for him in return for his long services;—that the lordship of the city of Piacenza would suit him nicely; and in short, that if his request were refused, he should decline to continue any longer in the Duke's service, and should leave Sforza not only to escape from the position in which he held him, but free to work his will on the Duke's commanderless army.

Piccinino had made his calculations with perfect accuracy and correctness, so far as they were based on an intelligent comprehension of the Duke's interests. Putting out of the question all the claims which his long past service gave him on the Duke's justice and gratitude,—a view of the matter to which in all probability he trusted very little,—there could be no doubt that the crushing blow he was about to deal the Venetian army, and its inevitable consequences, were well worth to the Duke the guerdon he asked for. The destruction of the Ducal army by the Venetians, on the other hand, would be the Visconti's utter ruin.

But Piccinino, as is so often the case with men who base their views of human affairs on dry calculations of interest, had left one element out of his reckoning,—the element of passion and indignation. He had offered the Duke a good bargain; but he had so offered it as to excite that despot's anger to such a pitch that he would rather have faced ruin than have dealt with him.

And the shrewd and crafty Filippo-Maria thought that

he could see the means of baulking the hopes of the general who had been insolent enough to chaffer with him, *without* facing ruin. He immediately despatched secretly a trusty agent, one Antonio Guido Buono of Tortona, to Sforza, offering favourable terms of peace to the allies, and to himself the hand of his daughter Bianca, with the city of Cremona for her dower, and for a pledge of the sincerity of his intentions. Situated as they were, the Venetians and the Florentines and their general were of course only too glad to accept the terms so unexpectedly and, to them, unaccountably offered; and Piccinino, to his utter consternation and amazement, received orders at once to draw off his army, as peace had been concluded. The expenses of the war had been so heavy, the Duke said in his public orders to him, that he had judged it better to accept a certain peace than to trust to an uncertain victory. Piccinino, in extreme astonishment, endeavoured to remonstrate, pointing out that victory was not uncertain but inevitable, and that the Visconti could never again hope for such an opportunity of crushing the constant foes of his house. The only answer he received was a threat that, if he did not at once obey the orders which had been given him, he should be cut to pieces by his own troops and those of the enemy opposed to him united together.* A.D. 1441.

Piccinino obeyed, with rage and despair in his heart. His knowledge of camps had not helped him to a competent understanding of courts. Though skilled in tactics, he had been void of tact. And therefore he failed to make a place for his descendants among the princes of Italy, and his name is not found among the "celebrated Italian families."

Sforza, on the other hand, secured his bride this time, after all the slips that there had been between that cup

* Macchiavelli, lib. vi. ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 83, *et seq.*

A.D. 1441. and his lip, and duly received with her the lordship of Cremona.

And the peace between Milan on the one side, and Venice, Florence, and the Pope on the other, was once again proclaimed in November, 1441.

Florence had thus been spending the hardly-earned fruits of her industry on a war waged for the support of republican liberty against monarchical despotism, with a stanchness and constancy to the cause that never failed in the conduct of her foreign affairs, while the tendency of her home politics was at the very same time steadily tending to bring about the consummation which all her efforts abroad were intended to avert: But in the meantime some events of a different kind had been taking place in the city, which occupied too large a share of the thoughts of the citizens, both at the time and for many generations afterwards, to be left unmentioned, though they exercised no influence on either the social or political development of the community.

Many attempts had, as every one knows, been made from time to time to compose the differences which divided the Greek or Eastern from the Latin or Western Church. But inasmuch as the points on which the two Churches differed were subtleties equally futile, absurd, and insoluble by the human intellect, little or no progress had been made towards so desirable a consummation. When, however, the danger of the final subjection of Constantinople by the Turks became imminent, and it was apparent that no assistance could be hoped from the arms of orthodox Catholics by men whose creed was amiss on the matter of the "procession" of the third Person in the Trinity, the Greeks began to think that a due examination of that and certain other such points might possibly bring them to see the error of the opinions they had held so long and so obstinately. So when it was determined to call an

œcumenic council at Bâle, the Greeks announced their purpose of attending it for the arrangement of the difficulties which had divided the two confessions. But the fathers assembled at Bâle and the Pope Eugenius IV. soon fell out, and the Pope transferred the council to Ferrara, creating a large number of new Cardinals, and excommunicating those who remained sitting at Bâle in spite of him. And the Council, thus transferred in 1437, was attended at Ferrara by the representatives of the Eastern Church, and sat in that city a little more than a year; during which time good progress had been made in the work of conciliation, when unfortunately the great concourse of ecclesiastics of all ranks and conditions produced the result which has, curiously, often followed from the same circumstances, and developed a pestilence in Ferrara, which put the learned but not sanitarily-conditioned assembly to flight. A.D. 1441.

Under these circumstances it was determined once again to transfer the Council, and Florence was determined on as the seat of its labours. This translation took place in the earliest days of 1439, at the same time that Cosmo de' Medici entered on his second term of office as Gonfaloniere.

On the 22nd of January, Cosmo, who had of course taken care that he should be himself Gonfaloniere on such an occasion, received the Pope and his cardinals with the usual honours. The Pope, however, was no stranger in Florence, and his presence in his old quarters at Santa Maria Novella was not a very exciting event for the citizens. But on the 12th of the following month came the Patriarch Joseph of Constantinople, a venerable man of great age and much learning, accompanied by a great number of the bishops and doctors of his Church. The palace of the Ferrantini family in the Borgo Pinti, the house now known as Casa Vernaccia, was assigned to this learned body as their

A.D. 1441. residence. Last of all came the Emperor on the 15th,—the Emperor John Paleologus: a much greater man probably in the imagination of the western Europeans, to whom he came sueing for reconciliation, than he was on his own crumbling throne in Turk-begirt Constantinople. The Florentine Signory, and the Pope with all his cardinals and doctors, and long processions of the monastic orders, went out to receive him at the Porta San Gallo; "and Messer Leonardo di Arezzo, the Chancellor of the Signory, made him a speech; and then with great honour they all accompanied him to the ward of Santa Croce, and assigned him his habitation in the houses of the Peruzzi." *

The old Florentine habit of always speaking of the city residence of any of the more prominent citizen families in the plural number has already been noticed, and the cause of such a mode of speaking explained. In the case of the Peruzzi it was especially and pre-eminently applicable. The "houses" of the Peruzzi consisted of a very numerous group of palaces, constituting almost a little town to themselves, in the immediate neighbourhood and to the south of the Piazza Santa Croce, where the site of them is still marked by the names of the "Arco de' Peruzzi" and the "Piazza de' Peruzzi." In this extensive group of family residences the Greek Emperor and the whole of his numerous suite were splendidly and commodiously lodged, as they probably could not have been in the private dwelling of any other prince, or indeed of any noble in Europe then existing.

A rare and very remarkable assemblage of the most learned men of Europe, and indeed of those extra-European seats of a past culture, which were even now giving forth the last flashes from a once brilliant light on the point of being quenched in utter darkness, was thus assembled in

* Cambi, *op. cit.* tom. xx. p. 215.

Florence. And a vast amount of formal conference beneath the glorious cupola which Brunelleschi had raised just in time to be house-warmed by so unique a gathering of theological sages, took place; as well as a still greater quantity of more private and informal discussion upon all the topics which were then beginning to stir the more cultured minds of the most advanced communities of modern Europe, in the palaces of the splendidly hospitable merchant-princes of the Republic, and in the semi-public thronged "*loggie*" attached to most of their dwellings. Doubtless many a long and unspeakably profound discussion on the rival doctrines of the identity of nature as opposed to the similarity of nature of the Persons of the Divine Trinity was conducted between high-capped, long-bearded, and subtle-eyed champions of the Eastern theological school, and the probably less erudite and less subtle-witted, but at least equally positive and stanch doctors of the Western Church, as they paced gravely to and fro beneath the beautiful arcades of the "*loggie*" which formed so distinctive a feature of "*Firenze la Gentile;*"—discussions ended and endable only by the supper hour in the adjoining hall of the munificent host, or by the "sleep-persuading sinking of the stars." But in Orgagna's matchless "*Loggia*" in the Piazza della Signoria, at the foot of the towering Palazzo Pubblico, where Cosmo de' Medici has his habitation during these months as Gonfaloniere, I fancy that that knot, of which the tall and singularly dignified figure of Cosmo himself is the centre, while more than one of the scholars, whose name still occupies a foremost place in the history of the revival of learning, is grouped around him,—I fancy, I say, that that group is not engaged in speculations on the exact degree of ecclesiastical condemnation, which must be held to render suffrage-masses unavailable to assist the lot of the departed. Nor even is our Chancellor Leonard of Arezzo, A.D. 1441.

A.D. 1441. that paragon of learning and good-fellowship, as he sits high up above the hum of the city in his own little private chamber in the Palazzo Pubblico, in close converse with some celebrated grammarian from Constantinople, busy with the somewhat more practical question of the universal supremacy of the Western Pontiff. Had Salamanca been the scene of the learned gathering, or Ratisbon, or Oxford, or even Rome, it might have been more likely that such might have been the subject of discourse. But your Florentine was never, at any period of his history, given to employ his acute but eminently practical intelligence on such high matters. No. The earnest and eager talkers around attentively-listening Cosmo are probably explaining some views of the Platonic philosophy as to their clashing with the teachings of the prevalent Aristotelian scholastic theories. And Chancellor Leonardo, methinks, is listening with eager eyes to a delightfully exciting account of manuscripts of certain of the writings of the ancient Greeks, which may be obtainable . . . by patrons of learning as munificent as those with whom Florence the brilliant seems to abound.

Of whatever quality the discourse, however, it was seasoned and diversified by no stinted amount of feasting; for Florence, under the leadership and example of the magnificent Cosmo, was bent on showing herself and the splendour of her merchant-princes to the best advantage, according to "the ancient custom of the Florentine citizens, whose habits are as frugal in private matters and ordinary life as they are marked by a character of marvellous grandeur on public occasions." *

Abstruse however as were the points at issue between the two branches of the universal Church, the Council did not separate till it had come to an agreement respecting

* Ammirato, lib. xxi. Gonf. 886.

them, and as it flattered itself, finally settled them. No new light indeed had been thrown upon the vexed question, whether the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist could be as efficaciously celebrated with unleavened as with fermented bread. But it had become more than abundantly clear to the Emperor of Constantinople, that his only last hope of defence against the ferocious Infidels, who believed in no Holy Sacrament at all, lay in the assistance which might be hoped for from these obstinate Western heretics. So the expositions of the Catholic doctors upon these points were found after all to have a good deal of weight in them; and "the difference between the two Churches was concluded and terminated on the 6th day of July, in the year 1439, on Monday morning, the day of Saint Romolo the Martyr Bishop of Fiesole, in the 9th year of the Pontificate of Pope Eugenius IV. And at the same time the Greeks confessed that the Roman faith proceeded rightly (*procedere bene*), and united themselves with it by the grace of God. And it was published in Santa Reparata,* how the Greeks had agreed to believe and to hold, and to observe everything that the Roman Church holds on the five articles in dispute, which are these: Firstly, that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and from the Son, and has His essence from the Father and from the Son. Secondly, that the statement in the Symbol of the Creed, that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, shall be reasonably understood to be laid down. Thirdly, that the Most Holy Celebration of the Body of Christ shall be understood to be and is true whether in unleavened or in fermented bread. Fourthly, that he who dies in sin for which penance has been done, but from which he has not been purged, goes to Purgatory; and that divine offices, such as masses, prayers, and alms are useful for the

A.D. 1441.

* The original name of the cathedral of Florence, called after its re-edification Santa Maria del Fiore.

A.D. 1441. purging of him; and that he who dies * in mortal sin goes to hell. Fifthly, that the Roman Pontiff holds the principality of the entire world, and that the Pope is the true Vicar of Christ."

"And when these five articles were agreed on, and mass had been said in a pulpit, which was placed in the middle of the choir, a cardinal and a Greek bishop got into the pulpit, having in their hands a sheet of sheep's skin; and on half of the said sheet, divided lengthwise, on the obverse side was written in Latin the substance of the five articles agreed on; and when they had been all read by the said cardinal, and by many other ecclesiastics, and those persons who understood such mysteries, they answered with a loud voice that they were content. And they were witnessed by four notaries of the Imperial Court, and by other four Greek notaries; and the ceremonial lasted six hours; and the church was as full of people as it could hold; and fuller than it had ever been seen to be before that day. And the shops remained closed that day and the next, as if it had been Sunday. And they have put up a memorial in marble letters, in the said church of Santa Maria del Fiore, on a marble slab by the side of the door of the sacristy; and on the other side a record of the consecration of the church by Pope Eugenius [which marble inscriptions may there be read to this day]. And on the 16th of August, a Wednesday, at three hours before sundown *lo Illustrissimo Imperadore de' Romani, e de' Greci Aghusto, si parti di Firenze per ritornare a Ghostantinopoli chon molta contentezza danimo.*"† With which specimen of worthy Giovanni Cambi's vernacular, we may (though he does not) take leave of the glories of that great day on the banks of the Arno.

* The more literal translation of old Cambi's quaint Florentine style would be: "and he who dies in mortal sin, let him go to hell."

† Cambi, *op. cit.* tom. xx. p. 219.

It will be easily understood, that the formal publication A.D. to the world of Christendom of this accord, which was then 1441. fondly supposed to have finally put an end to a schism which had divided and vexed the Church for so many generations, was felt to be a very great event, and the day so carefully specified by old Cambi perhaps the most memorable, for the wideness of its significance, of any yet recorded in the annals of Florence, while an honour unique in the history of all the Churches of Christendom had been paid to the equally unique fabric, which Brunelleschi had completed just in time for such a consecration so worthy of it. But the Turk advanced and swallowed up Constantinople, and its Emperors and Patriarchs and errors. The Western world began to tremble before the menaces of the masterful barbarian. There was no further hope that the Christian Empire of the East might be propped up by help from their Western co-religionists, let it think as orthodoxly as it might in the matter of unleavened bread. So the Eastern Church, seeing nothing to be gained by orthodoxy, fell back into the heterodoxy it preferred; and the fruit which that great day at Florence was expected to produce was blighted and came to nothing.

But, as has very frequently happened in similar cases, that meeting of Eastern and Western erudition at Florence did produce permanent and important results quite of a different kind from those which were expected from it. Those conversations and interviews which have been mentioned as busying themselves with topics more interesting and congenial to the Florentine mind than the proper and avowed subjects for the discussion of which the gathering was convened, produced also a much larger harvest of results. And it may be observed that this harvest could hardly have been so plentiful, had the representatives of Grecian learning and philosophy been carried by circumstances to any other city than Florence. For

A.D. 1441. wealth, and liberality, found as they were in rare conjunction with enthusiasm for learned culture, were needed for the impulse given to the revival of learning and classical taste by that congress. A Gemisthus Pletho could have effected little without a Cosmo de' Medici. But Cosmo was not alone, though his abounding means made him the most conspicuous among the knot of learning-loving merchant-princes, who were fired with enthusiasm for the recovery of the lost literature, which had once made Athens all that Florence aspired to become. There were other well-filled purses ever ready to furnish almost any sum that might be demanded for the acquisition of manuscripts of the ancient writers of Greece and Rome. But it was especially to Cosmo de' Medici, that the newly-born passion for the Platonic philosophy, as developed in the writings of the great master himself, and in those of his expositor Plotinus, was due. And the bent of Cosmo's mind, which led to the formation of his Platonic Academy under the special guidance of Marsilio Ficino, was doubtless the result of his intercommunion with the men of learning who thronged Florence on the occasion of the Council.

And the consequences of this influence were both important and permanent. Not only as regards the more evident and direct result of recovering the authors of antiquity, and promoting that study of them which so deeply modified the modern European mind, but as regards the more subtle and less easily traced consequences of the setting up of the Platonic philosophy in opposition to the old scholastic Aristotelianism, the visit of those Eastern sages produced effects of much wider-spread importance than their decisions on points of metaphysical theology. The self-preserving instinct which led the orthodox pillars of Catholicism to hate and anathematize the new philosophy was a true and just one. Aristotle, strained through the mind of St. Thomas, and manipulated during so many

generations by a clergy who had the manipulating of him all to themselves unchecked and uncontrolled, had become a safe and useful scholastic tool, almost Christianised by his long denizenship in the schools of orthodoxy. A.D. 1441.

But Plato had been submitted to no such process; and pure Platonism was pure heathenism. Nor can it be denied, that the Platonic enthusiasm of Cosmo, and in a yet greater degree that of his grandson, the magnificent Lorenzo, and the friends and learned dependents they gathered about them, contributed much to that very marked unchristianism of tone, that prevailed in the Italian society generally, and to a yet more remarkable degree in the Italian literary culture of the sixteenth century. Platonism, it is true, cannot be held directly chargeable with the production of cardinals who denounce the reading of St. Paul as likely to injure the purity of a Ciceronian style.* But the tone of mind which made such a state of literary taste possible, could not have been generated had not a philosophy, busying itself with the highest subjects that can engage human thought, yet wholly Pagan in its teaching and influences, come to replace the Christianity, which the theology of the Church had reduced to a system little capable of resisting the attack of its rival.

Nevertheless there seems reason to think,—though I am not aware that the fact has hitherto been adverted to,—that this irruption of Pagan sentiment was of important service to the Church as an unintentional ally in the trampling out of those tentatives at reformation, which were so thoroughly and so remarkably extinguished in Italy in the

* Cardinal Bembo to Sadoleto. The classical cardinal adds, that such "ineptiæ" are not fit studies for a serious man. See also a curious confirmation of the prevalence of such sentiments in a letter from Nicholas Hawkins, archdeacon of Ely, to Henry VIII., who had sent him as ambassador to Charles V. at Bologna in 1532. State Papers of Henry VIII., vol. viii. p. 404.

A.D. 1441. sixteenth century. The elegant dilettante Pagan culture was yet more utterly opposed to the religious doctrines and sentiments of the earnest-minded Reformers, than it was to the sleepy easy-going Catholicism of the Church. And the feeling that the Papacy was a valuable and unique Italian possession, which contributed much to the opposition the Reformers met with from many to whom disputes on points of theological doctrine were mere foolishness, was largely shared by the learned men,—ecclesiastics in some shape or other for the most part,—who had learned in the days of Leo X., and Clement VII., to regard the court of Rome as the thoroughly untrammelled and unprejudiced home of learned leisure and elegant philosophising dilettanteism.

It is true, that when Paul IV. had ascended the papal throne in 1555, and Pius V. in 1566, the Catholicism of Rome was no longer sleepy, or easy-going, or tolerant. But it was then too late. The Reformation had been successfully trampled out; and the paganizing littérateurs of the generation passing away had to slip their Platos and Ciceros once more under their breviaries. Still, enough of the Pagan remained to flavour very sensibly the whole development of the "*renaissance*" period in Italy, both in literature and art. And this flavouring was in a great measure due to, and was assuredly the most important result of, that memorable gathering of the learned men of the two Churches in Florence.

A pleasant account of the progress and working of the taste for classical studies thus engendered, may be found, —omiting any note of its absolutely Pagan character,—in the charming pages of Roscoe's rose-coloured history of Lorenzo de' Medici. But no record will be found there of Cosmo de' Medici's activity in another department, which occupied at least as much of his thought and time as the establishment of his Platonic academy. Gradually and

cautiously, but surely and unceasingly, the Medicean party was busy in securing and consolidating its ascendancy, which was in fact simply the autocracy of Cosmo. Day by day it became clear that all that was needed for this was the complete depression and destruction of the adverse faction, the counteraction and defeat of its schemes abroad, and the ensured powerlessness of the few men of any mark belonging to it who remained in the city. This was all that was needed. For the bulk of the citizens showed themselves more and more easily contented with the mere semblance of the constitutional forms, once so jealously devised for the protection of their liberties. The "Gonfaloniere," and the "Priori," and the guild officers of the "*Arti*," and all the other numerous officials created by the complex scheme of constitution which had been built up by the constant application of a system of appointing one man to check the possible malversation of another, were all still duly elected. And the citizens of the party in the ascendant were by no means disposed to criticise that manipulation of the election purses, which secured the offices of the Republic to themselves and their friends. But in truth the whole pith and worth of the constitution, as a system of guarantees for the liberty of the governed, was thimble-rigged away. The clock-work was all there and in action; the wheels were all seen to revolve as usual; but Cosmo had his hand so continually and to such purpose in the clock-case, that he made the dial show what hour he pleased, as entirely as if he had simply declared that the time of day was regulated by his own pleasure. A.D. 1441.

In the autumn of 1441, a very notable occurrence took place, which throws a strong light on the aims of the dominant party, and the means they were ready to adopt for the attainment of them, and at the same time indicates still more deplorably and ominously the low pitch to which legality and liberty had already fallen in Florence, and the

A.D. 1441. species of government which the citizens had already been taught to tolerate.

The only man remaining in Florence at all capable of offering any serious opposition to Cosmo, was Neri Capponi. Cavalcanti, in speaking of the two men, says, "these two were the greatest men in the Republic. The one, Neri, was the wisest, and the other, Cosmo, was the richest, of the citizens." * Neri Capponi was indeed, not only by capacity and social position, but on account of the long series of services rendered by his father Gino and by himself to the Republic, in various embassies, and specially as commissaries directing the movements of the Florentine armies, a dangerous opponent of the Medicean power. The important victory of Anghiari, which had so recently relieved the Republic from a great danger and apprehension, had been won under his superintendence. In this same battle one of the most distinguished and able of the Florentine generals was one Baldaccio d' Anghiari, who, probably from their intercourse and companionship in the course of the campaign, was a close and intimate friend of Neri Capponi. And there was reason to think, as Cavalcanti tells † us, that "if Neri wished to withstand the will of Cosmo, and should be raised to the chief magistracy, he might by the assistance of Baldaccio easily bring about a revolution in the whole political condition of the Republic." In high military qualities both of body and mind, Macchiavelli says, that this Baldaccio had no superior at that time in Italy; and that his influence among the infantry, which had been under his command, was such, that it was the universal opinion that he could command their support in any enterprise he chose to undertake.‡ Certainly a very dangerous man for one in the position of Cosmo de' Medici to have as his opponent.

* Cavalcanti, op. cit. vol. ii. p. 159. † Op. cit. vol. ii. p. 160.
‡ Macchiavelli, ed cit. vol. ii. p. 87.

So, "judging that it was dangerous to dismiss him from the service, and more dangerous to keep him where he was, *they* determined to put him to death." The words are Macchiavelli's; and the "they" in his text refers to "other citizens;" *i.e.*, other than Capponi and Baldaccio. But it is clear enough that in Macchiavelli's thought the "they" meant Cosmo and his creatures. A.D. 1441.

In the autumn of 1441, Bartolommeo Orlandini was chosen Gonfaloniere for the months of September and October, and the circumstance offered a favourable opportunity for getting rid of the too influential soldier. This Bartolommeo had been sent to oppose the entrance of Piccinino into Tuscany at a pass of the Apennines at Marradi, a small frontier town among the mountains, when the latter had commenced the invasion that terminated in the battle of Anghiari. The pass was one eminently susceptible of successful defence, and Bartolommeo ought to have held it against the invader easily. But at the approach of the enemy he had been seized with panic, and had disgracefully run from his post, crying out to his soldiers; "Take to your legs as your best armour! Save yourselves, for the enemy is upon us!"* The particulars of this disgraceful flight had become known, it seems, to Baldaccio d'Anghiari; and had, both by word of mouth and in various letters, been spoken of by him as such conduct was likely to be characterised by a good soldier. Hence Bartolommeo had a bitter hatred against Baldaccio; and his Gonfaloniereship was the right moment for getting rid of the latter.

The general of infantry had, it appears, certain accounts to settle with the Signory with reference to his pay, which caused him to be frequently in attendance on "their Magnificences" in the Palazzo Pubblico. A message,

* Cavalcanti, op. cit. vol. ii. p. 65.

A.D. 1441. therefore, from the new Gonfaloniere desiring him to wait on that magistrate at the Palace would not seem to have been calculated to excite either suspicion or surprise in Baldaccio. But ever-vigilant suspicion was needful prudence in those times and climes, and Baldaccio was not without misgivings. Cavalcanti states, that in his doubt respecting the expediency of obeying or disregarding this summons of the Gonfaloniere, Baldaccio went to ask the advice of Cosmo.* It must be observed, that no other writer mentions this circumstance. But on the other hand, it should be remembered that we have no other equally minute and detailed contemporary narrative; and that there is no reason whatever for thinking that Cavalcanti had any disposition to calumniate Cosmo de' Medici. In the earlier portion of his history he speaks of him with high praise and esteem. The tone of the latter portion of his narrative is that of an embittered and disappointed man; and his fierce censure is poured forth on all parties with an impartial hand. It is remarkable that Neri Capponi himself in his Commentaries makes no mention whatever of the incident in question, though Baldaccio was his special friend. But Neri wrote almost wholly with a view to the foreign politics and events of his time. Macchiavelli, though he has in a great measure based his history of these years on the contemporary narrative of Cavalcanti, has not repeated this statement with regard to Cosmo. But his account of the whole matter very plainly gives it to be understood that Cosmo was privy to the contemplated crime, though he does not say as much in direct words. Still, black as such guilt was, a deeper and more odious shade is added to the conduct of "the Father of his Country," by the supposition that he was guilty of treachery so base as that attributed to him by Cavalcanti. He

* Cavalcanti, op. cit. vol. ii. p. 161.

(Baldaccio) went in his doubt, says that chronicler, to ask counsel of Cosmo, if he thought that he would do well to obey the suspicious summons. And Cosmo so spoke to him as to remove all his doubts, and determine him to put his head into the trap prepared for him. He went up that magnificent staircase, so broad, so large, and so easy, that it would be perfectly feasible to ride up it,—those broad stairs, which flight after flight lead to the private chambers of the magistrates on an upper floor of the vast palace, and having been met by the Gonfaloniere in the corridor outside his own apartment, was there slain in the presence of that magistrate by armed men, who had been previously brought into Florence, and concealed in the Gonfaloniere's room for that purpose. The body was flung from the lofty window into the courtyard of the palace; and with a view of giving a ghastly semblance of legality to the murder, the Captain of the People was directed by an order of the Signory to cause the corpse to be beheaded, as if the execution had taken place in the ordinary course of justice. An accusation of treason was also trumped up, and a condemnation of the victim procured; the consequence of which involved the forfeiture of all the murdered man's goods. The Signory were however subsequently shamed into restoring these to the widow Annalena; who, feeling that there was no longer any place for her in the world, turned the palace which she possessed, immediately opposite to one of the modern entrances into the Boboli gardens, into a convent, which bore her name, Annalena; and, though it has been for many years once again secularized and restored to the purpose of a private habitation, is still known by the same. A.D. 1441.

The foul murder of one of the most distinguished captains in the service of the Commonwealth, just after his return from a campaign in which he had prominently contributed to win a victory of the utmost importance to the

A.D. 1441. country, beneath the eyes of the chief magistrate, whose title was Gonfaloniere *di Giustizia,* and whose special duty and office was the maintenance of law and justice, caused, Cavalcanti tells us, "a great outcry throughout the city and throughout Italy." But nothing was done to wipe off so foul a reproach from the character of the community. Florence was already too far gone in cowardly submission to the domination of a master, who could do and did so much for the material prosperity of the Commonwealth. Nothing was done; and, as Cavalcanti remarks, in concluding his account of the outrage, "dignities, when conferred on unworthy men, are manifestly a reproach and cause of infamy, not only to him who is clothed with them, but also to the Commonwealth which so clothes him!"

The citizens were not roused by this gross and barefaced murder of a man, who was thought to stand in the way of an ambitious citizen's stealthy approaches to arbitrary power; and it is very evident, that the movement down the fatal slope, on which for a long time past the Republic had been gliding, imperceptibly to itself then, but perceptibly enough to us now, was becoming rapid. The remark, indeed, with which Macchiavelli takes leave of this sad tragedy is singularly noteworthy; and sets before us in a yet more forcible light the unworthiness of the Florentines, as they then were, of liberty, and the corresponding certainty that it would not remain with them long.

"This event," says the Tuscan Tacitus, "beat down in a great measure the influence of Neri, and took from him reputation and friends!"* The cynical curtness of the statement is such as to cause the reader to cast his eye back to see whether he have read aright;—whether surely it was not Cosmo de' Medici and not Neri Capponi,—the wrong-doer and not the wrong-sufferer,—who endured loss

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 89.

of reputation and friends in consequence of the wrong done. But no, Macchiavelli says what he means; and shows not the slightest symptom of feeling that there is anything strange or startling in his statement. Neri Capponi's special friend has been murdered; and Neri Capponi can do nothing to prevent the deed or to avenge it. What is the use of being a friend of his? Cosmo de' Medici, on the contrary, can cause an enemy to be removed out of his way, and is so powerful that nobody can call him to account for it. Who would be an enemy of his? Clearly he is the man to stand or fall by! So high-handed crime gained "reputation" in Florence, and the victim of the wrong lost it. And in the due fullness of time, and the normal, fitting, and inevitable sequence of cause and effect, the political and moral corruption was followed by three centuries of political and moral death. A.D. 1444.

The "reputation" gained by the murder of Baldaccio d' Anghiari, the strength acquired by that removal of a dangerous obstacle, and especially the mode in which the deed was accepted and tolerated by the Florentines, encouraged the dominant party to proceed with increased boldness in their path. The slope on which the Republic was gliding became sensibly more steep, and the downward progress more rapid.

In the year 1444, the Medicean party having then been in power ten years, and the "*balia*," or commission with special powers, which had been granted to them after Cosmo's return from exile, having expired, it was considered that the time had arrived for making another decided step forwards towards the attainment of absolute power. "As many citizens began to assume," says Macchiavelli, "a liberty of speaking and acting with more courage than was deemed desirable, those who had power in their hands judged that, if they were minded not to lose it, it was necessary to renew their hold on it by anew

A.D. 1444. giving authority to their friends, and beating down their enemies." *

And the method by which those in power proceeded to effect this object is instructive. The veil which hid the action of purely absolute power from the eyes of the citizens by a semblance of the old constitutional forms was permitted to become thinner than ever; but it was not yet entirely dispensed with. A new "*Balia*," or Board with extraordinary powers, was created; but not as heretofore by calling together a parliament or general meeting of the citizens, in however tumultuous and perfunctory a manner. The new Board was simply appointed by the Councils, which the ruling powers had already taken care to fill to a sufficient degree with their own trusty adherents. Or, as Macchiavelli phrases it, "they"—the ruling powers,—created a new *Balia by means* of the Councils." This new *Balia* "reformed the offices." That is to say, it turned out of office all those on whom it could not implicitly depend, and filled every place with its own creatures. It gave authority to a small junta to create the Signory according to their pleasure. Poor Florence! The descent had been rapid, and the work had gone on quickly indeed. The veil had in truth become a most transparent film. The same new *Balia* by its own authority prolonged the period of exile, to which the proscribed had been condemned, and threw sundry citizens suspected of dangerous proclivities into prison.

"And by these means,"—the words are again those of Macchiavelli,—"they acquired for themselves authority and reputation—(mark the phrase and all that it involves!)—and humbled their enemies, and those whom they suspected." †

But while Cosmo de' Medici and his friends were thus

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 89. † *Ibid.* p. 90.

mingling Platonic studies with practical progress in the work of reducing a Commonwealth to a despotism, events abroad were hurrying on to issues, which without exercising any conspicuous influence on that fateful progress within the walls of Florence, entirely changed the aspect of public affairs and the state of politics in the other parts of Italy. A.D. 1444.

When the peace between Visconti and the leagued Republics was made in Lombardy, the conditions comprised a general restoration to all the parties,—with one or two exceptions as usual to the profit of the Venetians,—of what they had possessed before the war. But it soon came out,—and the circumstance is amusingly characteristic of the state of things and sentiments at that time prevailing in Italy,—that the two great captains, Sforza and Piccinino had, while publicly assenting to all the arrangements proposed by the parties to the peace, quietly come to an understanding with each other that both of them should be permitted to retain and acquire whatever they had gained or might be able to take from the Pope. And it is abundantly clear, that if only those two masters of almost all the physical force in Italy could have maintained their mutual understanding, no power in Italy could have said them nay. But that agreement they could not achieve.

In Naples two rival claimants of the crown were, and had for some time past, been in arms against each other, Alfonso, King of Aragon, and René of Anjou. The latter, who was an old friend of Sforza, when the peace in Lombardy left that general at leisure, implored him to come to the assistance of his cause in Naples. And Sforza, who had grounds of enmity of his own against Alfonso, was not unwilling to accept the invitation. But Alfonso, aware of the step his enemy had taken, sent to his old friend and ally the Duke of Milan, urgently entreating him to find some means of preventing his recent enemy, now

A.D. 1444. his son-in-law, from coming to René's assistance, as he proposed to do. The Duke, who had already begun to feel suspicious of his son-in-law, when he found that despite Sforza's marriage with his daughter, he could not succeed in making him entirely break with the Florentines and the Venetians; willing also to assist Alfonso; and aware of the Pope's indignation against Sforza in consequence of the discovery of the secret agreement between him and Piccinino, which seemed to offer a convenient means of satisfying Alfonso's desire, was well disposed to do as his old friend would have him. So he set about persuading the Pope, that the right moment was come for him to recover from Sforza those states which the latter had made himself master of to the prejudice of the Church; and to prove the sincerity of his advice, and induce the Pope to act upon it, he offered him the services of Piccinino and the army under his command. That general accordingly entering Umbria on behalf of the Pope succeeded in taking several places from Sforza, and, giving him quite enough to do to defend his own position, made it quite impossible for him to think of going to the assistance of René of Anjou.

René therefore, perceiving that he had no hope of assistance from Sforza, and that things were going more and more against him in Naples, came thence to Florence, where the Pope still was, to see—as a last chance before giving up all hope of success in his pretensions to the crown of Naples—whether he could move either the Florentines or the Pope to assist him. He was received with all the abounding hospitality which the citizens were at all times so fond of offering to princes of all sorts. The palace of the Bardi was assigned to him as a residence; and twenty-five golden crowns a day were allowed by the city for the expenses of his table.

But Florence was not inclined to go to war again. So

little was she disposed to do so, that, although the doings of Piccinino in the Pontifical States had, in more than one point,—(especially in having driven from Città di Castello, a city comprised in the provisions of the peace, Neri Viviani, a Florentine citizen, who was there in the capacity of Podestà,)—been such as to involve a *casus belli*, Florence had pretended, as Ammirato says,* not to see it. And even when the Duke of Milan failed to restore the district of the Modigliana to Florence, as he was bound to do by the conditions of the peace, the Florentine government declined to consider it a ground for war. It was not likely therefore that the Republic should again plunge itself into war in Naples for the sake of fighting the French pretender's battles. So René, seeing nothing to hope for in Italy, after enjoying the twenty-five crowns a day of table-money for awhile, took his departure for Marseilles. A.D. 1444.

It is worthy of notice, however, that notwithstanding this strong and unwonted determination of the Florentine government to remain at peace if possible, no fewer than twelve forced loans, amounting in all to a hundred and eighty thousand crowns, were raised in Florence at that time, the main object of which was to supply Sforza with the means necessary to him for the defence of his states against the attack of Piccinino. What could the very pressing interest have been, which induced Florence to load herself with debt, in order to supply the needs of a foreign soldier of fortune, at a time when she was so strongly bent on economy? Could it be that Cosmo de' Medici was already thinking that the time might come, when the signal favours done to the able general, who had just married the Duke of Milan's only child, might be repaid to those who had the Florentine purse strings in their hands, at some moment when the assistance of a

* Ammirato, lib. xxii. Gouf. 906.

A.D. 1444. little physical force from without might be very acceptable to a Signore of Florence, new in his seat?

Sforza, thus assisted, was enabled with varying success to hold his own against Piccinino and the forces of the Pope till the spring of 1444; when that General, having been considerably strengthened by assistance sent him from King Alfonso, was so much superior in force and in position that he seemed on the point of inflicting on Sforza a defeat, which would have taken from him all the territory which it had been the main object of his life to secure to himself and his descendants at the cost of the Pontiff. Once again the two great generals were in the same relative position in which they had been in Lombardy, when Piccinino's imprudent demand on the Duke induced that sovereign to snatch out of his hands the victory which seemed within his grasp.

But the Duke, who had sent Piccinino to fight against Sforza in Umbria, for the purpose of preventing the latter from going to the aid of René of Anjou in Naples, had no further object in fighting the Pope's battles against his own son-in-law, now that René had given up the contest. Neither did he wish that the man who had married his daughter should be altogether ruined. To which two motives of action may perhaps be added a third, arising from his still unforgetting anger against the general who had presumed to dictate terms to him as Piccinino had done. The result was that, just as Piccinino was on the point of crushing his adversary with certainty as it seemed, the Duke sent an urgent message, requiring him to come to Milan immediately on business of the utmost importance. Piccinino, "eager," as Macchiavelli says,* "to hear what the Duke had to say to him, left a certain victory for an uncertain advantage." Or, as Ammirato, who is at a loss to account for such imprudence, says,† "impelled by

* Macchiavelli, op. cit. vol. ii. p. 91. † Ammirato, lib. xxii. Gonf. 919.

the Divine will," he obeyed the summons, leaving his army under the command of his son Francesco. No sooner was his back turned than Sforza attacked Francesco, and utterly defeated him. The unfortunate Piccinino, finding on his arrival at Milan that the Duke had only been making a fool of him, and had thus for the second time snatched out of his hands the victory over his great rival, and hearing at the same time of the misfortune and capture of his son, died of a broken heart. A.D. 1444

But this miserable death of Piccinino, though it had resulted from a cessation of the Duke's hostility to Sforza, did not put an end to the state of intricate and apparently interminable quarrelling which had so long vexed the whole of the peninsula. The loss of Piccinino made it necessary for the Duke to seek some other general-in-chief to take the command of his armies. For this purpose he entered into communication with a certain Ciarpellone, one of Sforza's best captains, with the view of inducing him to desert the colours of that general, and take service with him. Ciarpellone was well inclined to accept the proposition made to him, but knew well that Sforza would never give his assent to such an arrangement. So he asked his leave to go to Milan, on some pretext of his own private affairs. But Sforza suspected the truth; answered Ciarpellone's application by arresting him, and shortly afterwards put him to death. The Duke was much incensed; and when about the same time hostilities began between Sforza and Gismondo Malatesta, lord of Rimini, his son-in-law, because the former had given the lordship of Pesaro to his brother Alexander, instead of giving it to his son-in-law Malatesta, as the latter had hoped, the Visconti sent a large body of troops to his assistance, and induced the Pope and King Alfonso to do so also. Whereupon Venice and Florence, which did not at all like any drawing together of the two great powers of Milan in the north of

A.D. 1446. Italy and Naples in the south, and feared that the result of such a friendship might be fatal to them, if the two despotisms should succeed in crushing Sforza between them, sent large assistance to him, if not in men, at least in money, which came to the same thing.

The Duke, meanwhile, not content with having thus filled all Romagna once again with war, thought the opportunity a good one for taking back from his son-in-law the important city of Cremona, which had been the dower of his wife. But in attempting this he found himself opposed to a Venetian army, which inflicted so severe a defeat on the ducal forces under Francesco, Piccinino's son, that hopes were conceived in Venice of conquering the whole of the Visconti dominions. The armies of the Republic overran the whole country, even up to the gates of Milan; and the old Duke saw himself in imminent danger of ending his turbulent and mischievous life in total ruin. In these circumstances Visconti stooped to implore the mercy and interposition of Sforza. It was true that he had placed himself in his present critical position entirely in consequence of an attempt to rob his son-in-law;—true that he had recently been engaged in an attempt to seduce from his duty one of Sforza's best officers;—but there were nevertheless powerful considerations to be adduced on the other side. Sforza had views and hopes of his own regarding the inheritance of the Visconti dominions. And it did not at all suit those views to let Venice seize the fruit before it dropped from the tree. Then, again, Sforza was beginning to be in sore need of money; for as soon as the Florentines saw that the Duke was in imminent danger of being crushed by the Venetians, they were very much relieved of their fear of the results of an alliance between him and the King of Naples, and doled out their money to Sforza with a proportionally less liberal hand. Visconti, too, was lavish of

promises. He would assure to Sforza the command in perpetuity of all the Milanese armies, if he would help him in his present strait. A.D. 1446.

On the other hand, the Venetians sent ambassadors to Sforza with promises no less tempting, and arguments no less strong, to induce him to join them, and abandon his father-in-law to the fate he had so well merited. Venice had richly deserved his gratitude by protecting Cremona for him. The Senate offered him the command-in-chief of all the Venetian forces for his life, and promised that Milan should be his if their united forces could take it.

Between the two applicants for his friendship and alliance Sforza found it exceedingly difficult to decide. As far as feeling went, it was all in favour of the Venetians. Sforza had, it must be admitted, abundant reason to hate and despise his very particularly odious and contemptible father-in-law. Nor could it be denied that, on the face of things, he had great reason to feel kindly towards the Venetians. But then those days and countries were not times and places in which princes were much swayed by considerations of feeling. And as to the promises, the main difficulty in choosing between them lay in the total impossibility of believing either party. Sforza hesitated much, for the choice was in all respects an important one. But while he was still hesitating, the imprudent cupidity of the Venetians impelled them to show the cloven foot, and decided Sforza to forgive his father-in-law for the past, and to cast in his lot with him for the future. Venice, at the very time that she was pressing on Sforza her claim to his gratitude for having preserved Cremona for him, was engaged in a treasonable plot with some of the inhabitants to seize the city for herself. The treachery was discovered, however, by Sforza's friends within the walls, and the result was that Venice, as Macchiavelli says,* "did not get

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 97.

A.D. 1447. Cremona, and lost the Count," *i.e.*, Sforza, who thereupon joined the Duke with all his forces.

While these negotiations had been going on, Pope Eugenius IV. had died in Rome, on the 23d of February, 1447. The result of his death, as far as it regarded Sforza, was to improve his position. For he had been at war with Eugenius; and Nicholas V., his successor, created on the 5th of March, commenced his reign by efforts to make peace in Italy. But just as Sforza was preparing to pass with all his forces into Lombardy to the assistance of his father-in-law, he received news of the death of that prince, on the 13th of August* in that same year;—an event which at once and evidently changed the whole political aspect of Italy.

The Duke, the last of the house of Visconti, left no heir, but had bequeathed his dominions to Alfonso, King of Naples. There was very small probability, however, that Alfonso would be able to make good his title to any such inheritance; and the only result of such a bequest was, as might have been clearly foreseen, to prolong the evils which Filippo-Maria Visconti had inflicted on Italy during his life for yet awhile after his death, by introducing another element of discord and uncertainty into the necessarily difficult question as to the future of the rich and powerful countries which had been ruled by him.

As another circumstance marking the commencement of a new era in Italy, though of course it did not for some time yet exercise any influence,—save perhaps in the shape of hopes,—may be mentioned the birth, on the 1st of January, 1448, of Lorenzo, the son of Cosmo's son Piero;—of him who was in due time to be Lorenzo the Magnificent.

* Ammirato gives the date thus correctly.—Lib. xxii. Gonf. 937. Macchiavelli says that the Duke died on the 31st.

CHAPTER VI.

Difficulties of Sforza's position—The Venetians eager to seize Milan—State of parties in Milan—The other Lombard cities—Sforza becomes general of the Milanese forces—Conditions between him and Milan—Florence supports Sforza with money—Remarkable picture of the state of things at this time at Florence from the chronicler Cavalcanti—Sforza besieges Pavia, which offers its sovereignty to him—His difficulty—He accepts it—Anger of Milan—Other pretenders to the sovereignty of Milan—Put down by Sforza—In the following spring he defeats the Venetians—Conduct of Florence—Venetian diplomacy—Venice determines to make peace with Sforza—Peace concluded—Rage and dismay of Milan—Milanese determine to continue the defence of their liberty by the services of the sons of Piccinino—Sforza besieges Milan—The Venetians besiege Crema—Milanese, hard pressed, implore the compassion and assistance of Venice—Venice takes Crema—And makes peace with Milan—Sforza finds means of deceiving both the Venetians and the Milanese—Dreadful distress within Milan, close besieged by Sforza's army—Rising of the populace in Milan compels the surrender of the city to Sforza—War between Florence and Alfonso of Naples—Debates in Florence as to assisting Sforza to make himself master of Milan—That policy strongly opposed by Neri Capponi—But decided on by the influence of Cosmo de' Medici—News of Sforza's success at Milan reach Florence—Feelings in the city—Venice determines on war with Sforza and with Florence—Alfonso of Naples allied with Venice—Venice seeks to pick a quarrel with Florence—Florence prepares for war—Exacerbation between that city and Venice—War delayed by a visit to Italy of the Emperor Frederick of Austria—The Emperor at Florence—Hospitality of the Republic—War breaks out on the departure of the Emperor—Desultory progress of the war—Cosmo's reply to an alarmed citizen—Further advance of the Florentine government towards despotism—A new "balia"—Fall of Constantinople—The Italian States frightened into making peace among themselves.

ALTHOUGH the death of Filippo-Maria Visconti, the last Duke of Milan of that dynasty, opened to Sforza, the successful soldier of fortune, who had after so many dis-

A.D. 1448. appointments constrained the Duke to give him the hand of his illegitimate daughter and sole surviving child, Bianca, the way to that great and brilliant prize which he had so long been looking forward to and scheming for, yet this death had happened at a moment and under circumstances that placed Sforza in great perplexity and difficulty. He had just broken with the Venetians, in a manner calculated to excite their utmost animosity. Not that the passion of anger or resentment, or still less any sentiment of moral indignation, seems to have exercised any powerful influence on the continually shifting alliances and hostilities that make up the intricate tangle of this period of Italian history. It was so thoroughly understood and avowed by all parties, that considerations of interest alone, undisturbed by any reference to moral principles of any sort, were the guide and rule of political conduct, that none, however they might occasionally attempt to make a little political capital out of loud accusations of treachery and ingratitude against their enemies, were ever really surprised by it, or so influenced by resentment as to permit it in any way to regulate their own future conduct. But the Venetians were fully as anxious as Sforza was to seize the prize of the Visconti heritage. And this it was that made the position of hostility so recently assumed by him towards them a danger and a difficulty. Then, again, he was, and had always been, the enemy of Alfonso, the King of Naples, an hostility which was of course inflamed and exacerbated by the fact that the King had been named by the late Duke of Milan as his heir. From the Pope, Sforza, who had been excommunicated by the late Pontiff in 1446, could expect no friendship nor countenance, as long as he continued the possessor of states violently taken from the ecclesiastical dominions. In Florence, Sforza had staunch and powerful friends; but the Commonwealth was still bound by the conditions of the league made between it and Venice.

But amid all these difficulties, his great hope lay in the distracted condition of Milan itself, and the differences which divided the Milanese in their hopes and wishes for the future. A.D. 1448.

In the first place, it was difficult to see what possibility there was for Milan to avoid immediate subjection to Venice, save by accepting the assistance and protection of Sforza. Then, of the three parties into which the citizens were divided, one wished to accept the son-in-law of their old Duke as their Prince; a second party, of those who were in favour of a monarchical form of government, wished to submit themselves to King Alfonso; but there was a third—and the strongest—party, who were anxious to get rid of despotism altogether, and establish a republic. Immediately after the Duke's death, this party prevailed so far as to succeed in establishing a republican form of government in the city of Milan. But none of the wealthy and powerful cities which had composed the great duke-dom of the Visconti were willing to submit themselves to this government. Some of these cities preferred a monarchical government; and those which did not were by no means content to accept the sovereignty of Milan. Lodi and Piacenza, in these circumstances, gave themselves to the Venetians. Pavia and Parma declared themselves free and independent republics. Cremona, which, as has been seen, had been subjected to Sforza as the dower of his wife Bianca, remained loyal to him. In that city, plenipotentiaries sent by the republican government which had established itself in Milan, arranged with Sforza that he should assume the command of the Milanese forces. It might seem that, considering Sforza's known ambition to become the sovereign of Milan, and the successor of his father-in-law in all the Visconti greatness, and the existence in Milan of a strong party who wished that he should succeed in attaining that position, the republican govern-

A.D. 1448. ment would have done better to choose any general for the head of their army rather than Sforza. The arrangement that was made, however, shows how totally the Milanese republicans were unable to help themselves. There was, in fact, no other alternative left to them, save submission to Venice. It was Sforza or Venice. The terms agreed upon at Cremona between the great general and the republican government included, besides all those which the late Duke had offered to Sforza, the understanding that in case of success against Venice, Brescia should belong to "the Count,"—as Sforza is always called in the pages of the Italian historians;—and further, that if Verona should be made prize of, then Sforza should become lord of Verona, and should restore the less wealthy and important city of Brescia to the Milanese. It was hoped probably that these sops might so far suffice to satisfy the craving of the great captain's ambition, as to induce him to act fairly and honourably by the citizens who were putting their destiny into his hands. But the hope was a miserably vain one; for, as Macchiavelli says, in speaking of Sforza's subsequent conduct, "Great men do not call gaining by means of treachery, shame, but only consider losing as such." *

There ought to have been another and a better hope for Milan in this conjuncture of circumstances. Had Florence been at this time what she once was, she would have been the ready and natural ally and protector of such a city as Milan, in its attempt at such a crisis to escape from despotism into the liberty of a free and independent Commonwealth. The same Florence which had striven so perseveringly, and had expended so many millions in barring the encroachments of Lombard despotisms southwards, should have joyfully seized the favourable opportunity of putting an end to that danger for ever, and spreading in the north

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 104.

of Italy a form of polity which all her traditions, and the vital principle of her own existence, taught her to prefer, not only as the most desirable for herself at home, but as the safest and best for the other members of the Italian family of nations. But Florence was no longer the same. If enough of the old spirit was yet alive there to have made it still a dangerous and imprudent step for any citizen to have ventured on avowedly seizing on the supreme power,—if the old pride in their constitutional liberties, which had once made a Florentine feel, with all the simplicity of perfect conviction, as much superior to the vassals of the feudal princes around them as an Englishman feels to the subjects of continental despotisms, was yet sufficiently alive to be amused and flattered by a deceptive semblance of the old forms of freedom,—there was no longer any such living faith in the superiority of their own system, as could prevent the Florentines from looking with complacency at the subjection of the Milanese to Sforza, or could make it dangerous for the most powerful among them to assist that would-be despot with large subsidies from his own immense private resources.* Can there be any doubt what was the nature of the motives that induced Cosmo to risk his own popularity in the city,† by the imposition of burthens destined to supply Sforza with money, and to furnish him during all this critical period of his career with large sums from his own coffers? And yet Roscoe could write, that Cosmo had no thought of suppressing to his own profit the liberties of his country! ‡ A.D. 1448.

The impression produced in the city by this policy of Cosmo with reference to Francesco Sforza, and by the financial troubles arising from the supply of these subsidies, may be read somewhat more truly in the pages of those

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 117.

† Cavalcanti, *op. cit.* vol. ii. ch. 20-21.

‡ Roscoe, Life of Lorenzo de' Medici, ch. 1.

A.D. 1448. contemporary writers who confided the murmurings and the low-whispered discontents of the people among whom they lived to "*ricordi*," to be safely stowed away in family muniment-rooms, unconscious of the all-revealing curiosity of the coming time, which was to give their "treasonable" records the publicity of the press.

Cavalcanti, in the 29th chapter of his so-called "second history," writes as follows:—

"Would to God that these sums of money were at least destined to pass into the hands of some one who had rendered, or would in future render, some particle of service to the Republic! Not but what the people whisper that, though the Count's * name is put forward, the least part of the money goes to him. And the people say: 'But what has this Count ever done? He lost Brescia for the Duke (Galeazzo Visconti); he took the Signor of Lucca, not indeed as an enemy, but to make him his soldier.' And with this excuse of the Count, the evil-doing men, who for their fraudulent ill purposes foster his ambition, have made the public stocks the instruments of their iniquity. For this cause they have decreed that the generality of the citizens should not receive the payment of their credits,† while the great men receive theirs in entirety. And any one who had to pay his new contributions, received what was due to him from the treasury in promises to pay. And this kind of dealing called into existence a whole host of speculators,—government men of the second class. They looked out for citizens thus situated, and bought of them for a fourth or fifth of the nominal value these treasury promises to pay. And the buyers were all of them men who had the means of drawing from the

* Francesco Sforza, at that time known as "the Count," though shortly to be "the Duke."

† *I.e.*, the repayment of the sums advanced by forced loans, together with the interest due on them.

treasury the entire sum, without waiting for the time when these notes fell due. And in this felon manner, many who had nothing amassed large fortunes; and private citizens were enriched while the Commonwealth was impoverished. Many families, left without their head, became to their shame dishonoured. There were unmarried women whose sons assisted at the marriage of their mothers, without ever having known their own fathers.* And if the honour of my country did not forbid it, as well as the innocence of the girls, when the matter is looked at with reference to the necessity of their mothers, I would name many of them; and would not conceal the names of those powerful men who inflicted so base an injury. * * * Another equally abominable iniquity due to this same law † was that, when girls reached the time of life when they ought to marry, the dowries, for the assurance of which money had been duly deposited in the public funds, were not forthcoming, on the plea that the Commonwealth was too hardly pressed for money to be able to pay them, no regard being had to the fact, that of all commodities the flower of girlhood is the most perishable." A.D. 1448.

The reader who wishes for a further description of the corruption of morals and manners into which Florence had fallen during the last few years, may compare a passage,

* To our habits of thought and modes of life, it seems that a series of explanatory statements are needed to connect the disorders described in the text with the malversations of the administration of the national debt. To the old Florentine, the path in which the events marched seemed too clear to need any explanation. As an English author might have written: "Tampering with the public credit ruined many men, and many estates were in consequence thrown into the market;" and the statement would have appeared a perfectly simple and natural one. The mediæval Florentine feels it to be equally natural that wide-spread distress should have forced possessions of another kind into the market; and proceeds at once to the more remote consequences, conceiving all the intermediate links in the chain of causation to be abundantly clear.

† *I.e.*, the voting of subsidies to Sforza.

A.D. 1448. which he will find in the fifth book of the history of Giovanni Bruto.* The sudden and very remarkable moral deterioration which accompanied the rise of the Medicean power, shows curiously how much more fatally pernicious was the Medicean method of purchasing their birthright of liberty from their fellow-citizens for a mess of pottage, than the ruder plan which the feudal military tyrants of these times more usually adopted.

The first thing that Sforza did with his own and the Milanese forces was to make his appearance before Pavia, which had set up an independent republican government of its own. The poor little city perceived at once the hopelessness of resisting the forces brought against it by the greatest captain of the age; and being anxious above all else to avoid the destiny of subjection to Milan, determined on seeking a way out of its difficulties by "giving itself," as the phrase went, to Sforza, not as simply making military submission to him as general of the Milanese army, but as accepting him as its absolute lord and master. This decision had at all events the result of greatly embarrassing the conquering general. To accept what was offered to him would be an act of very black treason and treachery against Milan, which had entrusted him with the command of her troops on very generous and favourable terms, in order that he might use them for the recovery and protection of their subject cities, for their profit, and not for his own. On the other hand, the offer tempted him powerfully; for the possession of such a city would be a most encouraging commencement of the enterprise on which his heart was fixed.† The moral aspect of the matter troubled him very little. But he feared that the indignation of the Milanese at his treachery might drive them to throw themselves into the arms of the Venetians.

* Ed. cit. p. 235.

† Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 104.

And, again, he feared that if he refused the offer, the citizens might "give themselves" and their city to the Duke of Savoy, which would bring into Lombardy a new and dangerous opponent to his future views and hopes. After some hesitation, however, Sforza determined on accepting the Lordship of Pavia, and the allegiance of its citizens, hoping, says Macchiavelli, that he would be able to quiet the Milanese by representations to the effect, that had he refused, the city would have submitted either to the Venetians or to the Duke of Savoy; and that either of these would have been a more dangerous neighbour to them than he would be. The anger with which the news was received in Milan, however, was, despite all these arguments, very great; and nothing would have prevented the citizens of the new Republic from openly breaking with their general, save the consciousness that to do so would have made immediate subjection to Venice inevitable. So, under the pressure of necessity, and hoping that when once they should have by Sforza's assistance liberated themselves from the fear of the Venetians, they might then be strong enough to get rid of their too powerful general, they allowed matters to continue as they were. A.D. 1448.

Sforza did, in the remaining months of the autumn, effectually repress and deliver his employers from the attacks and claims of certain other pretenders to the succession of Filippo-Maria Visconti. Among these were the Duke of Savoy, together with the Genoese, and Charles of Orleans, the son of a sister of Filippo. These pretenders made some show of attempting to support their claims by force of arms; but they were easily put down by Sforza, whose interest was so far in accord with that of the Milanese.

After these successes he spent the winter in quarters at Cremona; and in the early spring marched out to do battle with his only serious opponents, the Venetians.

A.D. 1448. The plan of the campaign laid down by the Milanese government was to attack Lodi, then in the hands of the Venetians, and if they could succeed in taking it, to bring the Venetians to favourable terms of peace. And Sforza, though he would have preferred attacking Brescia, which was to be his by agreement, if it were taken, saw fit to obey the government he professed to be serving in this matter. The attempt on Lodi was begun by Sforza by laying siege to the strong position of Caravaggio, the reduction of which he considered must lead to the fall of the former city. The Venetian Senate, thinking similarly, ordered their general, Micheletto Attendolo to raise the siege at all hazards. And an engagement followed, under circumstances of great disadvantage to the Venetian army, which resulted in one of the most crushing defeats that had ever been experienced by the Queen of the Adriatic.* The Florentine historians say that more than eleven thousand out of twelve thousand cavalry were made prisoners. Sabellicus, the authorised state historiographer of Venice, admits a loss of eight thousand cavalry and infantry together. The writers of both nations agree in stating that the quantity of booty which fell into the hands of the victors was enormous, and that the defeat was a most terrible one.

The immediate consequence of this victory was the occupation of all the country as far as Brescia by Sforza and the Milanese army, which prepared to assault that city; while the Venetians used every possible effort to get together a sufficient force from the remains of their routed army to defend it. In this position, the Venetians thus hardly pressed, made application to Florence for assistance, according to the terms of the offensive and defensive league still in force between the two Republics. And

* Istorici delle cose Veneziane, tomo primo, Sabellicus, Dec. 3, lib. vi. p. 671. Macchiavelli, *op. cit.* vol. ii. p. 106.

Florence sent them Gismondo Malatesta with two thousand cavalry, and Gregorio d' Anghiari, with one thousand infantry; not, as the historian Ammirato explains, "that their good-will towards Sforza was in any degree changed, but that their treaty obligations and the necessity of the times constrained them to do so." So that Florence was at the same time assisting one of the parties in the field with men, and the other with money. A.D. 1448.

But notwithstanding the demand thus made on Florence, and the somewhat grudging assent to it on the part of the Florentines, the object of Venice was, if possible, to negotiate, and not to continue the war. It was almost as sure as fate in those days, as Macchiavelli tells us, that Venice should be as successful in negotiation as she was unsuccessful in war, and that what she lost by the latter she should recover redoubled by diplomacy. The Venetian Senate accordingly, well aware of the divergence of views and hopes which separated the Milanese from Sforza, and of the suspicions and discontent felt by them for their general, did not doubt that there would be little difficulty in making peace either with the Milanese against Sforza, or with Sforza against the Milanese. The delicate point was, which of the two courses would be the best policy, with a view to their ultimate object of becoming themselves sovereigns of all Lombardy. After mature consideration, it was determined in Venice to make peace with Sforza; for the Senate was persuaded "that when the Milanese should see themselves thus betrayed by the Count, they would in their anger submit to any domination rather than his; and that when Milan was in this manner reduced to a position in which she could neither defend herself nor trust to Sforza, she must of necessity fall into their hands."*

The Count asked nothing better than to make peace

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 108.

A.D. 1448. with Venice, fully intending to keep it as long and no longer than his views on Milan should render it useful to his plans. So an agreement was quickly concluded, by the terms of which Venice was to pay Sforza thirteen thousand florins a month "as long as he abstained from the conquest of Milan," and was to supply him with four thousand cavalry and two thousand infantry; in consideration of which the Count engaged to restore to the Venetians all the places and prisoners he had taken from them in the late campaign, and to content himself with retaining all such places as the late Duke had possessed at the time of his death.

The news of this accord was received, as may easily be imagined, with the utmost consternation and rage at Milan. The government sent ambassadors to Sforza, who made him a long speech,—given at length by Macchiavelli,—in which they told him that they had come to him, not with any hope of obtaining right or justice from him, but merely for the gratification of telling him what they thought of him. He, with an air of lofty superiority, pardons them their passionate and ill-mannered words;—tells them that he had only done in self-defence that which they had first tried to do,—viz., to make a separate peace with Venice to his detriment—(a statement for which there does not appear to have been any foundation)—and ends with answering their appeal to Heaven, by an assurance that the upshot of the matter would very clearly show them that God was on his side;—a boast which, as all the world knows, he satisfactorily made good by eventually becoming Duke of Milan.

The ambassadors returned to their indignant fellow-citizens, who were determined, under the generalship of Francesco and Jacopo Piccinino, the sons of the late Duke's general, who remained faithful to Milan mainly in consequence of the old rivalry between their father and

Sforza, to do their best to defend their city and their liberty. Sforza and the Venetians on their side prepared to push the war actively against them; and the former, well understanding that he could hope for the co-operation of the Venetians only just so long as it might suit their plans, assigned to them an attack on the important stronghold of Crema, thinking that they would be sure to remain true to his alliance, at least until they had got possession of that place. A.D. 1448.

And it turned out in this tripartite game of cunning, falsehood, and mutual treachery, just as Sforza had shrewdly anticipated. While the Venetians besieged Crema, Sforza overran all the rest of the Milanese territory, and pressed Milan itself so closely that it was reduced to a condition of the greatest distress. Thus pressed, the unfortunate city sent an embassy to Venice imploring the compassion of the Venetians, warning them that it was the true policy of republics to protect each other, and pointing out the danger that they would themselves be exposed to from the ambition of Sforza, who, when he had made himself master of the dukedom of Lombardy, would assuredly not remain content within the former limits of that State. But the Venetians had not yet taken Crema; and till that was accomplished they could not venture to make the sudden change of sides they contemplated. While replying publicly, therefore, to the Milanese ambassadors that their alliance with Sforza made it impossible for them to do as the citizens wished, they privately made such communications as were calculated to encourage them to hold out yet a while longer.

Milan did accordingly prolong her resistance till the city was so closely pressed by Sforza's army that the suburbs were already taken, when Crema fell into the hands of the Venetians, and they immediately made a peace and alliance with the Milanese, the main article of which was an under-

A.D. 1449. taking to preserve the liberty of Milan,—by which is to be understood its independence and republican form of government,—and sent orders to all their troops in Sforza's camp to quit it immediately, and retire within the limits of the Venetian territory. They also intimated to the Count that they had made peace with Milan, and gave him twenty days to decide whether he would accept it.

The granting of this delay appears to have been a fatal mistake, of which Sforza instantly determined to avail himself. He detained the ambassadors sent to him by Venice for two days, and then sent them back with a declaration that he would accept the peace, and send plenipotentiaries of his own to Venice to settle the terms of it. He did accordingly send agents, to whom his instructions were, not to be induced by any means to sign any treaty of peace, but to waste time in making difficulties, and to keep the Venetians in the constant expectation that they were on the point of doing so. In order the more successfully to delude the Venetians, and lead them to suppose that he was in earnest in his acceptation of the peace, he accorded the Milanese a month's truce, and drew off his army from the immediate neighbourhood of Milan. By these means he so effectually succeeded in misleading both the Venetians and Milanese, that they were equally confident that the war was over, and equally negligent in preparing for its possible continuance. It was the winter of 1449, too, when the month's truce was at an end, and the Venetians supposed that at all events nothing would be done till the next season. But Sforza, as soon as the time of the truce was up, recommenced active operations against Milan, without any regard for the treaty of peace which was supposed to be in progress; and Venice sent an army under Pandolfo Malatesta to raise the siege. That general, however, was unwilling to risk a battle against Sforza, and represented to the Senate that the

want of supplies would assuredly compel the Count to move from his present position very shortly; that the immediate vicinity of the Venetian forces, and the encouragement imparted to them by Venetian promises, would certainly induce and enable the city to hold out till that should be the case; and that Venice would then take possession of the coveted prize without risk or chance of failure. The Senate agreed in this view, and authorised their general to remain inactive accordingly. But Famine was fighting within the walls on Sforza's side, and was too quick in its operations for these dilatory tactics. The governing classes in the city, indeed, seeing help so near, and constantly assured by the Venetian ambassador, who was resident among them, that the Venetian army was on the point of attacking the besieging force, would fain have continued to hold out. But Milan had always been a city "*naturally* abounding in poor," as Macchiavelli says, apparently not seeing any connection between this phenomenon and the despotic government of the worst sort to which the city had for so many generations been subjected. Whether naturally or not, Milan had no such stored wealth as might have enabled such a city as Florence to weather a like storm without suffering the extremity of distress; and the people were dying of starvation in the streets. The result was a popular rising against the rulers of the city, in which many of them lost their lives, and among others Leonardo Veniero, the Venetian ambassador, whom the populace accused of having prolonged their agonies by his fallacious promises. The mob took the matter entirely into their own hands, and gave up the city to Sforza on the 26th of February, 1450.* A.D. 1450.

While these important events had been happening in Lombardy, Florence (with the exception of sending the

* Marcantonio Sabellico, *op. cit.* book vii. dec. 3, vol. i. p. 686. Macchiavelli, *op. cit.* vol. ii. p. 121. book vi. Ammirato, book xxii. Gonf. 952.

A.D. 1450. small assistance to Venice for the satisfaction of their treaty engagements, as has been mentioned) had taken no active part in them on either side. During the earlier part of the time the Republic had been engaged in a small war with Alfonso, King of Naples, who had essayed to avenge the favour which Florence had always shown to his competitor of the house of Anjou, by an invasion of the southern portions of the Florentine territory, and specially of the Maremma, where he had laid siege to the town and port of Piombino, till he had been driven to abandon it by the unhealthiness of the Maremma climate. But when that was over, and Alfonso had retired baffled to his own dominions, Florence enjoyed a brief interval in a condition of warfare which seemed almost to have become her normal state. She had been, however, a watchful and deeply-interested observer of all that was going on, and had assisted Sforza largely with money if not with men.

The first Signory of the year 1449 is recorded to have granted him a subsidy of from twenty to twenty-five thousand crowns; and it was thought that Cosmo's private advances to him reached a much larger sum.*

But after the renewal of the war against Milan, when Sforza, having thrown off the mask, was alone in the field against the Milanese and the Venetians, he had made an urgent application to Florence for assistance. And the request gave rise to very earnest and important debates in the Florentine council-chambers, which very luminously illustrate the state of politics and parties in Florence. The Medicean party, which had already caused the city to spend its money so largely for Sforza, and Cosmo himself, who had spent so much of his own for the same purpose, were of course strongly in favour of sending the rising and fortunate adventurer the aid he asked. They argued that

* Ammirato, lib. xxii. Gonf. 946.

it was vain to imagine that there was any possibility that Milan should maintain itself as a free and independent state;—that the antecedents, habits, and historical traditions of that city rendered it quite incapable of any such destiny;—that it was perfectly evident that either the Venetians or Sforza must become the sovereign of the late Duchy of the Visconti;—and that it was far more for the interest of Florence that the latter should be in this position than the former;—that it was, in fact, a question between having "a powerful friend for your neighbour, or a far more powerful enemy."* They urged further, that there was little reason to doubt that the side which they proposed to assist would eventually prove the winning one; for that supposing (as they contended it must be supposed) that the Milanese were unable to maintain their independence, it was not to be thought that they would choose the alternative of submitting themselves to the Venetians, inasmuch as it was well known that Sforza had a strong party in his favour in the city, whereas nobody had ever heard of any such Milanese party in favour of Venetian sovereignty. A.D. 1450.

But these reasonings, and the line of conduct which it was desired to base on them, were not accepted in the Palazzo Vecchio without resistance. Notwithstanding the decided ascendency of the Medicean party, which had by this time acquired such consistency and stability that the city could hardly have escaped from it by any means short of a violent revolution, there were still influential citizens who (though they may not have been prepared to attempt such a desperate remedy, and, if they had been so prepared, would probably not have been suffered to remain in the city) were still sufficiently independent to offer such constitutional opposition as was yet possible to any measure,

* The words are Macchiavelli's.

A.D. 1450. especially of foreign policy, of which they disapproved. There was still Neri Capponi;—the principal, if not the only notable, obstacle, to the absolute power of Cosmo de' Medici. His influence was still, as Macchiavelli assures us, extremely powerful in Florence. He, and his father Gino before him, had rendered a long series of brilliantly successful and highly appreciated services to the Commonwealth. But these had been rendered almost entirely abroad, in the capacity of ambassador, or commissary superintending the armies of the Republic on foreign service. And it is probable that a career of this nature, while it enabled Neri to acquire a title to the respect of his fellow-citizens in a department of the public business that brought him into little opportunity of clashing with the Medicean policy at home, was at the same time the means of shielding him from any such personal enmity as might have marked him for proscription at the hands of the dominant faction.

Now the views of Neri Capponi were entirely opposed to those of the Medicean party on the important subject of the Florentine policy in Lombardy. He by no means despaired of the cause of Milanese liberty. And he was very strongly of opinion, that it would be better, not only for Florence, but for Italy in general, that two Republics should divide Lombardy between them. He fully admitted that there would be a great danger in permitting Venice to acquire such a preponderating power as would result from the acquisition by her of the sovereignty of all Lombardy. But he thought that a still greater, as well as a more imminent, danger was involved, in permitting such a man as Sforza to succeed to the powerful despotism of the Visconti, who had for so many years been a grievous thorn in the side of the Commonwealth. But besides this, he argued that sending assistance to Sforza was the surest way to run into the one evil, if not into the other. For if the Count were so strengthened that the Milanese had no

hope of resisting him, there was the probability that they might throw themselves into the arms of Venice to escape the domination of a master against whom they had so much cause to be exasperated. So that in every way the only policy for Florence was to strive to make peace, on the basis of leaving the Milanese their liberty, instead of fomenting a war, which could not end otherwise than disastrously for the Commonwealth, by sending to Sforza the means of continuing it. A.D. 1450.

It is very evident that those were the sympathies and opinions of a Florentine republican of the old stock, and equally impossible to mistake the tendency of the views and desires which preferred the establishment in Lombardy of an autocrat bound by ties of gratitude to the dominant party in Florence, and still more strongly by ties of private friendship and private debt, to the citizen who was looking forward to occupy the same position in Tuscany that Sforza was in the act of stepping into in Lombardy. And when the Medicean party taunted Neri and his friends with taking the line of argument they did, not because they were really of opinion that the policy they recommended was for the advantage of the Commonwealth, but because they feared that the success of Sforza at Milan would render Cosmo too powerful at Florence,* surely it might well be answered that the two causes were identical;—that the policy recommended was the best for Florence, precisely because the reverse tended to render Cosmo powerful;—that the Mediceans were putting on a cap which very exactly fitted them, and that their complaint was prompted by the irrepressible consciousness of the justice of the suspicion complained of.

But, as might easily have been anticipated, the opposition of Neri Capponi was of no avail. It was decided to

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 117.

A.D. 1450. send plenipotentiaries to Sforza, with orders to arrange for giving him the support required, in case it should be found that his position was such as to give a fair hope that his enterprise would turn out a successful one. It has been seen that Sforza had already been wholly successful before the Florentine ambassadors reached him. They had only got as far as Reggio when they learned that Sforza had been proclaimed Duke of Milan, and that the city had thrown open its gates to him. So that the Medicean party could boast that at least they had not committed the Republic to an alliance with the losing side;—that however, the "causa victa" might recommend itself to the sympathies of the Florentine Cato, it was the "victrix causa" which the gods, as Sforza had boasted to the unhappy Milanese, had patronised, as well as Cosmo and his friends.

"Whoever should attempt to describe by words," says Ammirato,* "the joy with which the Florentines heard the news of the rare good fortune of the new Duke, would fall far short of the truth." They were persuaded, he goes on to say, that the deep-seated hatred which had so long subsisted between the Commonwealth and the Visconti, and which had caused so much bloodshed, so many dangers, and such immense expense to the Republic, would, by the accession of the new prince, be changed to a firm and lasting friendship. In short, as usual, they were more influenced by personal animosity than by regard for principles. Yet the Florentines might have remembered, as there were still some few men among them who did remember, that the cause of enmity between Florence and the Visconti had been the diversity of vital principle which existed between them, and the necessity, on the part of the free Commonwealth, of withstanding the encroachment of a

* Ammirato, lib. xxii. Gonf. 953.

power necessarily and irreconcileably hostile to its own existence. And they might have understood that, if the same power—let the name of him who wielded it be what it might—could ever come to be less dangerous and less hostile to Florence than it had been in the past, the cause of such change could only be found in the change of the spirit which animated the political system of the latter community. A.D. 1450.

But the time had come when the few men left of the stamp of Neri Capponi might remember with bitterness the words that old Niccolò da Uzzano had spoken of the last generation of Florentines. "These citizens are ready to sell themselves, and their fortune has found them a purchaser!" If the saying was in some degree true of the contemporaries of Cosmo's father, it was far more fatally so of the present generation. A still more powerful and more liberal purchaser was dealing with a yet more corruptly venal population. The purchase-money had in great part been paid; and the citizens, debauched by the disbursement of it, were fully prepared to find the public weal in whatever promised a continuance of the profits arising from the traffic.

The more immediate and clearly visible evils, however, which necessarily resulted from the line of policy decisively adopted by Florence were not long in making themselves very sharply felt. Venice, at no time favourably disposed towards the rival trading community on the banks of the Arno, which, though equally in name a Republic, was in political tendencies and traditions as much antipathetic to the aristocratic Queen of the Adriatic as it was in social habits and manners of life,—Venice, bitterly disappointed in the brilliant hopes she had conceived from the extinction of the Visconti dynasty, but by no means resigning herself as yet to the abandonment of them, determined at once on war;—war, of course, with

A.D. 1451. Sforza, Duke of Milan, but equally and quite as bitterly with Florence, his ally. There was an alliance also ready for Venice. Alfonso of Aragon, King of Naples, was the enemy of Sforza, who had always supported the cause of René of Anjou, the rival claimant of the Neapolitan crown, and who was now, moreover, holding forcible possession of the states bequeathed by the last of the Visconti to him. He was also the enemy of Florence, which had likewise ever favoured his rival René, in accordance with the ancient friendship existing between the Republic and the royal house of France, and which had, moreover, recently repulsed somewhat ignominiously the Neapolitan armies from the territory of the Commonwealth. The four leading powers, which at that period divided the strength of the peninsula among them,—the two republics of Venice and Florence, the Duke of Milan, and the King of Naples,—were thus not unequally arrayed against each other; and each party sought to group around it such of the second-rate and minor states as it could. Venice, unsuccessfully, endeavoured to gain Bologna; and Florence, successfully, to make a league with Genoa.

But while all Italy was thus preparing for war, and everybody knew that the two hostile camps would be composed and arrayed as above stated, an offensive and defensive treaty of alliance still existed between Florence and Venice; and a regularly drawn agreement of peace had been signed between Naples and Florence,* at the conclusion of the recent little war between them. It was necessary, therefore, according to the ideas of the times, to find some decently plausible pretext for picking a quarrel. So Venice sent ambassadors to Florence, complaining that the

* The terms of this peace, notwithstanding that Florence had decidedly had the advantage in the war, were that the Signore of Piombino should send every year to Naples, as tribute, a golden vase, worth five hundred florins; and that the King of Naples should retain the island of Giglio, which he had taken.

Florentines had permitted Alessandro, the brother of Francesco Sforza, to pass through their territory into Lombardy, and had advised the Marchese di Mantua to enter into alliance with Sforza;—both acts contrary to the interests of Venice, and breaches of the treaty existing between the two cities. Florence, by the mouth of Cosmo de' Medici, made a long reply, according to the best rules and practice of statecraft as then understood, declaring her desire for peace, and hinting her perfect readiness for war, with appeals to heaven, secundum artem. Cosmo wound up his "long and wise oration"* by saying, that Florence wished all the world to understand that she should allow whom she pleased to pass through her territory; and that she supposed that the Duke of Milan knew his own affairs well enough to make friends with the Marchese di Mantua if he thought fit to do so, without asking the advice of Florence in the matter. He supposed, therefore, that the Venetians had got something else in their minds; and if so, Florence would soon let them know, &c., &c., &c.;—very much after the approved fashion of a couple of boys at a street corner, squaring for a match of fisticuffs. A.D. 1451.

It is remarkable enough that, though a member of the Canigiani family was Gonfaloniere at the time, and it does not appear that Cosmo was in office at all, the historian tells us that the duty of answering the Venetian ambassadors was entrusted to him as "head of the Republic"—"*capo della Republica;*" just as if that were some title known to the constitution of Florence.

The Venetians pretended to leave Florence satisfied with the reply made to them, and on good terms with the Florentines. But very soon afterwards, in June, 1451, news came to Florence that every Florentine citizen and subject was ordered to quit the territory of Venice, with all

* Macchiavelli.

A.D. 1451. his goods, on or before the twentieth day of that month. And already it was known in Florence that Alfonso had taken a similar step with respect to his dominions.

In these circumstances, Florence prepared for immediate war, after the old fashion of the Republic. A "Ten of War" were appointed, at the head of which sat Cosmo de' Medici and Neri Capponi, and at the bottom of it Giuliano di Particino, a tavern-keeper, and Bartolommeo, son of Francis, an armourer. So that, though there was a "head of the Republic," the citizens had the satisfaction of knowing that their political constitution was as democratic, and "liberty" as safe, as ever.

Active measures were also taken to ascertain clearly who were their friends and who their foes throughout Italy. Ambassadors were sent to the Pope, to Siena, to Naples, and to Genoa. Pope Nicholas would make no promises; only abounded in exhortations to peace, alleging, not without much reason, that Christian States would do well, as things were going, to think of uniting their arms in their common defence against the Turks, instead of tearing each other to pieces.

In fact, ambassadors from the last of the Emperors of Constantinople had just then passed through Florence on their way to Rome, on the vain errand of imploring these Italians, who were so intent on their wars with each other, to come to the assistance of the perishing Empire of the East. They besought the Florentines to do aught they could for the cause of Christendom against Islam;—mentioning, incidentally, that the Venetians had been endeavouring to persuade the Emperor Constantine Paleologus to banish all Florentines from his dominions, but that the Emperor had refused to do any such thing.

The progress of the ambassadorial intercommunications, which it had been thought due to decency to go through as a preface to the coming war, had served, as might have

been anticipated, only to irritate and exacerbate the feelings of the different parties towards each other;—more especially of the Florentines and Venetians. It does not appear that King Alfonso was very anxious to go to war; and Sforza would, of course, have been willing enough to remain at peace, on condition of being allowed to retain the booty he had seized. But Venice and Florence were becoming every day more fiercely incensed against each other. A.D. 1452.

Nevertheless, the outbreak of the war was delayed by an incident which curiously indicates the sort of respect still felt in Italy for the person and character of the Emperor of Germany, as such; and places the relationship existing between him and the different Italian States in an amusing similitude to that between a pedagogue and a number of unruly boys.

On the 14th of January, 1452, a "solemn embassy" from the Emperor Frederick of Austria arrived in Florence, requesting from the Republic permission for the free passage of two thousand horses on the occasion of his journey to Rome, there "peacefully" to receive the Imperial crown. The style and nature of the courteous request marks a long distance between the present state of things and that which prevailed when last we had to speak of relations between the Emperor and the Florentines. The latter replied, by three ambassadors who went immediately to meet the Emperor at Ferrara, that the citizens begged his Imperial Majesty would make use of their city no otherwise than if it were his own. On the 30th he arrived in Florence, where he was received with every demonstration of respect and hospitality, being welcomed at the San Gallo gate with a speech by Carlo Marsuppini, the secretary of the Signory, and one of the most distinguished scholars of the day. A reply was spoken on behalf of the Emperor with equal learning and eloquence by his secretary, Æneas

A.D. 1452. Piccolomini, who some half-a-dozen years later became Pope, under the title of Pius II. Their Imperial guest was lodged by the Florentines in the handsome apartments at Santa Maria Novella, which had already served as a residence for two Popes. His Empress arrived at Leghorn while Frederick was at Florence, and an embassy was immediately sent to meet her at that port to escort her to Florence, and specially to pay all her expenses as long as she should remain on Florentine territory, on a scale of the utmost magnificence. It is furthermore recorded that two Cardinals, who were sent by the Pope to meet the Emperor at Florence, were similarly franked by the Commonwealth as long as they remained on Florentine ground. The Emperor left Florence on the 6th of February, was crowned at Rome on the 15th of March, and reached Florence again on his return northwards on the 5th of May, and left it to continue his journey on the 7th. His departure on this second occasion was so sudden and hurried, that he got into the saddle and was off, before the Signory, who in the Piazza were mounting and getting into order to accompany him, were aware of it. They rode after him, however, with all speed; and it is satisfactory to know that they caught him on the road, and there, somewhat breathlessly, it may be supposed, made their bows and expressed their wishes for his happy journey;—which was continued without much intermission till the Emperor reached Vienna.

Then, and not till then,—not till the potentate whose supreme authority had in some shape been once recognised by all the States of the peninsula was fairly out of the way,—the war began, and King Alfonso attacked the Florentines in Tuscany, and the Venetians attacked Sforza in Lombardy.

The former began by overrunning the country in the neighbourhood of Volterra, having crossed the Florentine

frontier on the 16th of June, 1452. The Neapolitan army consisted of about eight thousand cavalry and four thousand infantry, under the command of the Duke of Calabria, the King's son. And though the Florentines were not at the outbreak of the war provided with a sufficient force to oppose such an army, they were in a few months enabled, by taking various free-lance captains and their men into their service, to get together a force of seven thousand cavalry, and not far short of four thousand infantry. Between these nearly matched forces the war was carried on in a desultory manner all the remainder of that season and during the whole of the following year. But no notable engagement took place; no result was attained, save that of wasting the money of the Florentines and the lands of the unlucky inhabitants of the scene of war (chiefly the Val di Chiana and the southern parts of Tuscany); and no very rancorous spirit of hostility seems to have animated the combatants. The orders given to the Florentine commanders were in nowise to risk an engagement, unless the safety of some place of first-rate importance made it absolutely necessary to do so. And a story has been recorded which illustrates the spirit in which the war was carried on;—how a citizen, with alarm and dismay in his face, came running to Cosmo, telling him that news had just reached Florence that the enemy had made themselves masters of Rencine—(a small castle in the Chianti hills, not far from Brolio, the seat of the Ricasoli family, whose wide estates in that neighbourhood suffered much in this useless war)—whereupon Cosmo, smiling pleasantly, replied, "Dear me, you don't say so! Pray can you tell me in what part of the dominions of the Republic Rencine is situated?" * A.D. 1452.

But the war, which was so unproductive of important

* Ammirato, lib. xxii. Gonf. 968. Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 125, *et seq.*

A.D. 1452. and durable results abroad, was not equally without consequence at home. As usual, it was found that a state of war required "a strong government," and was made the needed excuse for still further destroying the foundations of the old Florentine constitution, and advancing the community another step on the road to submission to despotic power. During the Signory which entered office on the 1st of July, 1452, it was found that the frequent change of magistrates interfered unfavourably with the prosecution of the war as vigorously as was desirable. A continual variation of plans and ideas was involved in these changes, which was not calculated to second the efforts of the generals in the field. In short, the discovery was made, that a despotism is the best sort of government for the purposes of war; that even as an army is a machine necessarily constructed, ruled, and employed on despotic principles, so despotic power is necessarily increased in the hands of the home government, in proportion as the army and the employment of it become the most important part of the social life of the community;—that peace is the condition favourable and congenial to constitutional and free institutions, as war is and has ever been the element in which despotism thrives and delights. So Florence, with a view to the "vigorous" prosecution of the war, and the "vigorous" imposition of taxes necessary to that end, was persuaded to create a new "*balia*," or board of commissioners, with more extensive powers than had ever been granted hitherto. The commissioners were named for five years; they had power to make a new examination of the names contained in the election purses; *i.e.*, to cook the returns for the different offices at their pleasure; to impose taxes by their sole authority, and to decide inappellably, as occasion should arise, on all important questions of State policy.* In a word, the power given for five years to the

* Ammirato, lib. xxii. Gonf. 967.

new "*balia*" was all but absolutely dictatorial; and it is needless to add that the commissioners were of course the mere puppets of Cosmo de' Medici. A.D. 1453.

Among other means of carrying on the war and distressing their enemy, the Florentines had adopted the very efficacious one of bringing back again into Italy René of Anjou, the pretender to the crown of Naples. Ambassadors were sent to France for the purpose of obtaining the co-operation of this royal ally, and the means taken to persuade the scion of French royalty to prosecute his own claims and fortunes are curtly explained by the despatches of Acciaiuoli, one of the ambassadors to France, who briefly states that he has hired him to come with 2400 cavalry by the middle of June, 1453, prepared to make war whereso-ever the league—*i.e.*, Florence and the Duke of Milan—should require him.

But while these things were passing in Italy, a war of a very different kind was being waged on the shores of the Bosphorus, with a result that for a while availed to frighten the Italians into peace among themselves. On the 18th day of June, 1453, "the most filthy Mahomet, Prince of the Turks, made himself master of the most noble empire of Constantinople;" and the news of this great event reached Florence in the first days of July, to the great dismay and consternation of the citizens.

Ever since his accession, Pope Nicholas V. had been striving to induce the Italian powers to make peace, and insisting on the probability of their being called upon to unite for the common defence of Christendom, and especially of Italy, against the Turk. He had entirely refused to take any part himself in the war which had been going on around him; and when the terrible and startling news, that the Christian Empire of the East was a thing of the past, and that the oncoming tide of Infidel conquest had swallowed up Constantinople, was spread over Italy; and

A.D. 1454. the combatants, though alarmed and inclined to lay aside their fratricidal arms, still haggled over petty matters of arrangement, and delayed to make the peace which was so urgently necessary; the Pope burst into anger, and declared that he would excommunicate whosoever did not at once lay down their arms.

To Venice the success of the Infidel arms was especially terrible, and brought with it a trumpet-tongued warning of the necessity of making peace with foes, who were at the worst friends in comparison with the Infidels. Of course, Sforza was ready enough to make peace, if only he was allowed to keep the magnificent prize he had seized, and left to consolidate and confirm his power as Duke of Milan. Peace was accordingly made at Lodi between Venice and the Duke on the 11th of April, 1454, and was also proclaimed at Florence on the 14th of the same month, the Duke having duly consulted the Florentines—that is to say, Cosmo—on the subject, and arranged his measures with them. Venice had not, however, behaved with any such consideration to her ally the King of Naples, which caused that sovereign, indignant at this want of courtesy, to delay for a short time before giving in his adhesion to the general peace.

All was however at length finally arranged; and a peace proclaimed "for thirty years;"—still further guaranteed between the King of Naples and the fortunate new comer among the crowned heads of Italy, by a double marriage, Sforza receiving a daughter of the King as his son's wife, and giving his own daughter to the King's son.

CHAPTER VII.

Pope Nicholas V. succeeds in getting a general peace signed on 25th March, 1455—His death—Elevation of Calistus III.—The peace broken by the mercenary soldiers—Jacopo Piccinino attacks Romagna—He is routed—Alfonso of Naples gives him an asylum—Proposes that the governments of Italy shall pension him—The Pope stigmatises such a proposal—Proclamation of a crusade against the Turks—Enthusiasm for it cooled by news of the defeat of the Turks near Belgrade—Commencement of a division in the Medicean party—Agitation for a non-renewal of the "*balia*"—Cosmo's prudence—Demand for a new catastal survey—The new survey ordered—Dismay of the wealthy citizens—Attempt to call a parliament without the co-operation of Cosmo—He defeats this attempt—Luca Pitti—Cosmo suffers him to call a parliament—By which a new "*balia*" is granted—Farce of that pretence of a parliament—Exclusion of the peasant class from all civil rights by the old municipal theory—The new "*balia*" restores all the despotic authority of the Medicean party—"Priori dell' Arti" to be henceforth called "Priori di Libertà"—Luca Pitti becomes the most powerful man in Florence—Piero de' Medici—Luca Pitti's palace—He becomes odious to the citizens—His arbitrary tyranny—Cambi's theory of liberty—Florence refuses to take part in the war between the two claimants of the throne of Naples—Sforza, now Duke of Milan, supports the house of Aragon—The Pope Pius II. visits Florence—Son of the Duke of Milan at Florence at the same time—Festivities in honour of these guests—Ball—Tournament—Last years of Cosmo de' Medici—His wealth—The public works executed by him—His last years not happy—Position of his family—Death of his son Giovanni—His grief at the failure of all attempts to subjugate Lucca—His appearance and character—His death.

POPE NICHOLAS, of whom it is related that he never was known to smile after the news of the taking of Constantinople by the Turks had reached him, was not content with having at last succeeded in making peace between the various powers of Italy. This was, after all, but a negative

A.D. 1455. provision against the evils by which in his opinion Christendom was threatened; and he was anxious to organize the whole of Western Europe in a defensive league first, and then in a crusade against the advancing Infidel. The first object he almost, but not quite, lived to see accomplished. Alfonso of Naples had made peace, as has been shown, sulkily and reluctantly; reserving to himself, when he did consent to do so, the right of making war, if he should see fit, against the Genoese, Gismondo Malatesta of Rimini, and Astorre the Signor of Faenza. The two latter were specially obnoxious to him, because, having taken his pay during the late war, they had deserted his standard and joined the Florentines. With the former he had had for a long time past various grounds of quarrel. And all these small matters delayed the attainment of the object which the Pope had so much at heart. At last, however, in the beginning of 1455, after infinite journeyings to and fro of ambassadors, and a vast quantity of talk, all the plenipotentiaries met in Rome, every obstacle was finally surmounted, and it was settled that an universal league between all the Italian powers, to last for twenty-five years, should be published simultaneously in all the cities of the peninsula, on the 25th of March.

But Nicholas V., who had shown himself to have a somewhat more worthy idea of the position and duties of an universal pastor than any one of his predecessors for a very long time back, was not permitted to see the accomplishment of the work he had so earnestly and perseveringly laboured to bring to perfection. He died, "full of anguish and bitterness,"* in the night preceding the 24th of March;

* The words are those of Ammirato, book xxiii. Gonf. 982. Whether his distress was caused by the danger to Christendom arising from the advance of the Mussulman power, or from disappointment at not being able to witness the formal publication of his league, is not clear. He had assuredly less cause for anguish and bitterness of heart on his death-bed than most of his predecessors and successors.

and the news reached Florence in the evening of the day on which the Gonfaloniere Bernardo Ridolfi had proclaimed the league, and while the citizens were in the midst of their rejoicings for so auspicious an event. A.D. 1455.

The new Pope, Calixtus III., seemed inclined to follow the policy and concur in the views of his predecessor. He at once intimated his desire that the league should be maintained, and signified his own desire to continue in it, ... more especially as he had need to call on the members of it already, to take action in a matter, of which the terms of the league obliged them to take cognisance.

It had been feared, when the peace was made in 1454, and when the King of Naples had refused to permit the Genoese to be comprised in it, that future war might grow out of that incident. But such was not the cause which first disturbed the almost unprecedented harmony in Italy. For the peace was broken, "not openly by the King, but, as was ever the case in times past, by the ambition of mercenary soldiers."* Jacopo Piccinino, finding himself out of employment, and unprovided for, got together a number of captains of lesser note, together with their bands, who equally found their occupation gone in those piping times of unwonted peace, and without any pretence of a commission from any ruling power, marched into the Romagna, and thence into the territory of Siena, where he made himself master of sundry small places. Italy might have fancied, says one of the historians, that she had gone back again to the old times of "the great Company" and the "enemies to God and to mercy."

But it was somewhat too late in the day for this, especially at the moment of the newly-born fervour in Italy in the cause of peace. Pope Calixtus sent, as quickly as possible, a force under his general Giovanni

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 138.

A.D. 1455. Ventimiglia, and demanded that the other members of the league should bestir themselves to put down this infraction of its provisions; whereupon the Florentines and Duke Sforza (grown respectable, and a supporter of order, now that he was quietly seated on his Ducal throne) sent troops to help in putting down this insolent dog of war, who refused to be muzzled when his masters had no longer need of him. He was quickly brought to bay near Bolsena; was routed, and would have been utterly ruined, if Alfonso of Naples had not first assisted him with money, and then given him an asylum in his kingdom;—conduct which caused Alfonso to be very generally suspected of having instigated his enterprise from the first, with a view to disturbing the peace, to which he had consented with an ill grace; and which explains the word "apparently" in the passage above cited from Macchiavelli. By Alfonso's mediation, too, the free-booter received twenty thousand florins from Siena in consideration of giving up the places he had seized;—a mere robbery of that little republic, inasmuch as he had no power whatever to hold his booty. The King, indeed, had endeavoured to do better than that for his discreditable protégé; having striven to persuade the members of the league to make Jacopo their captain-general, with a yearly salary of an hundred thousand crowns, . . . for the sake of quiet, as he said. And, had it not been that Pope Calixtus strongly represented to his fellow-sovereigns how shameful a thing it would be for so many princes to become the tributaries of a brigand, who had insulted all Italy by his lawless violence, the attempt at extortion would probably have been successful.*

In the autumn of that year the Pope made solemn proclamation throughout all Italy of a crusade against the Turks; and the usual means were resorted to to stir up

* Ammirato, lib. xxiii. Gonf. 984.

the imagination and stimulate the enthusiasm of the population. On the 19th of October, "there was made in Florence a great and devout procession, more devout than ordinary, for there were six thousand persons—or, as Ammirato writes, twenty thousand—in it, between men and women, and boys and girls, all clothed in white, with a red cross on their shoulders, singing and chanting psalms as they went." * And a jubilee was proclaimed, with special indulgences and spiritual privileges of the most desirable kind for all who would assume the cross; and still more decisive advantages for any who should be happy enough to die in battle against the Infidel. And Florence "neglected no means either public or private, by which it could be shewn, that she wished to be the first among Christians, in aiding such an enterprise with her counsels, with her money, and with her blood. Only this enthusiasm for the crusade was somewhat cooled by news which arrived to the effect, that the Turk had been routed and wounded by the Hungarians in the neighbourhood of Belgrade." * A.D. 1455.

It did not seem likely that it would be found necessary just at present for the crusaders, whose zeal had shewn itself by impelling them to bawl litanies against the Turk through the streets of Florence, to take any yet more active steps for the defence of Christendom. And peace began to produce symptoms of the results which appear to have been inseparable from it in Florence. Intestine discord seems to have been the absolutely necessary alternative for foreign war. But in the present state of things in Florence, it might be supposed that the citizens were necessarily precluded from such an outlet for their restless humours. The Medicean faction had so completely triumphed over its adversaries, and was so entirely in the

* Cambi, *op. cit.*, Deliz. Erud. Tosc. tom. xx. p. 334.
† Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 139.

A.D. 1457. ascendant, that it is difficult to imagine how the materials for a quarrel were to be found.

In this difficulty the Medicean party began to divide itself, and to quarrel among its own members.

"Never in Florence," says Macchiavelli,* "did any party remain united longer than the party opposed to it remained alive."

As long as Neri Capponi lived there was a remnant of constitutional opposition to the party of Cosmo de' Medici and his friends. But Neri died on the 22nd of November, 1457. And a portion of the party in power, seeing that there was no fear, at any rate for the present, of any resurrection to influence of their old opponents, and imagining, that a larger portion of the honours of the Republic might fall to their share by the old form of election, than was awarded to them in the distribution of good things among the members of the party by the extraordinary and unconstitutional action of the plenipotentiary "*balia*," began to agitate in favour of a return to the old constitutional practice. This "*balia*," or commission with extraordinary powers, which had been granted by the people to Cosmo and his friends after his return from exile in 1434, had, in the twenty-one years from that time till 1455, been renewed six times. Under it the Medicean faction had finally and entirely crushed out the remains of the old Albizzi, and so-called aristocratic party, and had quietly and comfortably shared the loaves and fishes among themselves. But in these twenty-one years the Medicean faction had come to be pretty well co-extensive with the entirety of the ruling class. Old men of the opposite party had died out, had perished in exile, had been thrust down in the world, or forced into retirement and obscurity. New men had come up, and had, as might naturally be

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 151.

expected, grown up Mediceans. The number of sharers in the Medicean monopoly of good things was larger than it had been; the members of the party looked round and saw that everybody was one of them. Why, it had come to such a pass, that it could hardly be said to be a party or a monopoly at all! Who was excluded, save men whose social position now would surely and naturally exclude them, and who no longer counted for anything? A.D. 1457.

So the more ambitious spirits, and those who thought that they might hope far more from the public favour and the ballot-box than from the autocratic heads of a party, which had come to embrace everybody, began to agitate for the non-renewal of the unconstitutional "*balia*," and the resumption of free elections. Cosmo, as Macchiavelli remarks, might have met this movement in two ways. He might have insisted by force on the renewal of the "*balia*," and carried it with the assistance of those partizans, who remained firmly attached to his person; or he might have let the malcontents have their will, and left it to time to show them that they had injured themselves rather than him, trusting to the care which had been taken for years past to fill the election purses with the names of his friends only. Cosmo chose the latter and the safer plan. He knew very well that he was safe; that the elections, let them be made how they would, must fall on friends of his; and that the chances were that the malcontents of the party would find themselves much worse off than they had been under the working of the "*balia*."

This turned out to be the case, and produced discontents, which had the effect of creating an outer and an inner Medicean party, the latter closely adhering to the person of Cosmo, who still affected, as in the case of readily consenting to the non-renewal of the "*balia*," to follow the wishes of the masses of the citizens. In reality he was only following the wishes of those discontented leading

A.D. 1458. men among his own party, who thought that they should get more from the public voice than from him, and was simply giving them rope enough to hang themselves with.

The shrewdness of this policy on the part of Cosmo, and the consequences resulting from it, were very remarkably illustrated shortly afterwards in the first months of 1458, by what then took place with regard to the "*catasta*," and the results of the legislation then adopted.

It will be remembered that in 1427, the scandalous and intolerable partiality, which had long prevailed in the distribution of the public burthens, had compelled the adoption of a measure of reform with reference to that subject. The burthens in question consisted of the forced loans by means of which the public treasury was then and still continued to be mainly supplied. And the clumsy inaccuracy in the method of assessment, which made it practicable to throw almost the entire onus of contributing to those loans on the comparatively poor citizens, while in a great degree exempting the enormously wealthy merchant princes in whose hands the oligarchical government of the republic was at that time concentrated, had at length compelled the introduction of an assessment based on a "*catasta*," or general survey and estimation of property and income. Pagnini, in his excellent work on the taxation and commerce of the Florentine Republic, says,* in speaking of this "*catasta*," that this method was always adopted in the imposition of all public burthens up to the year 1495. But Macchiavelli, in pointing out the consequences of the demand made by a fraction of the Medicean party for a return to the old method of election to public offices, speaks of a "resuscitation" of the catastal methods of assessment as one of these consequences.† So that it would seem that, though the forms prescribed by the law

* Pagnini, della Decima, vol. i. p. 30.

† Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 153.

of 1427 had been preserved, yet means had been found by the rich and powerful to escape from some part of the pressure which should have fallen upon them. And indeed it is clear enough from the opposition that was made to the proposal for a new survey on precisely the same basis as the original one of 1427, that the operation of the old one had become unduly favourable to the rich. The measure for a new survey was passed, however, by the magistrates elected after the constitutional manner, in consequence of the non-renewal of the "*balia;*" and Cosmo looked on, well contented that the aristocracy of his party should receive a lesson that they would remember, on the effects of trying a return towards a more popular form of government. The proposal to revise the survey, however, was by no means merely a party move, or the result of discontented radicalism on the part of the masses. The community was deeply in debt in consequence of the late war with the King of Naples, and Venice; and in a great measure in consequence of the sums that had been granted to Sforza; and it was urgent to find some means of relieving the finances. So the measure was passed; and the commission for the execution of it duly named, in accordance with the provisions of the law of 1427. The dismay among the wealthy citizens was extreme, and a considerable number of them went in a body to Cosmo, to entreat that he would "save them and himself from the hands of the populace;" put matters back again where they were; take another "*balia,*" and return to that snug and comfortable autocracy, which "had so successfully governed the city and made the greatness of his own family." But Cosmo pointed out to them that all this was much more easily said than done. They had chosen to return to a more popular form of constitution, and he was by no means disposed to put himself in opposition to the wishes of the people, as expressed by the magistrates of their choice.

A.D. 1458.

A.D. 1458. There was now no means of going back again to the recent state of things, which their discontent had caused to be abandoned, save by calling a "*parlamento*" of the people; and he, Cosmo, was totally opposed to any measure of *violence*, — which last phrase is thus used remarkably enough in speaking of what to our ideas sounds so entirely constitutional,—the calling of a parliament.

Upon this refusal of Cosmo, attempts were twice or thrice made by the malcontents, who had been thus led into cutting their own throats by their greedy desire to monopolise the offices and honours of the state, to induce the elected magistrates and councils to create a "*balia*," with extra-constitutional powers as before. But all these efforts were unsuccessful.

These events occurred in the first Gonfaloniereship of the year 1458, which was the thousandth from the first institution of the office in the year 1293. And the discontent and fear of the new survey were so strong, that in the second Gonfaloniereship of that year, Matteo Bartoli,* the new Gonfaloniere, at the instigation of the same men, who had appealed to de' Medici, as has been related, attempted to call a parliament in opposition to, or at least without the concurrence of, Cosmo. This, however, would not have suited the views of that shrewd and cautious politician; and he might, if it had seemed desirable to him, have made some political capital by an ostentatious support of constitutional legality in opposition to the attempt. But Cosmo had no intention of allowing the people to possess itself of its constitutional plaything so entirely, as that he should not be able to take it away from them again when he should see cause to do so, being aware that, as Macchiavelli

* Ammirato, lib. xxiii. Gonf. 1001. Macchiavelli says that Donato Cocchi was Gonfaloniere for these months, and attributes to him that which Ammirato relates of Bartoli. From other writers, it appears that Matteo Bartoli was certainly Gonfaloniere for the months of March and April, 1458.

phrases it, "it is not well to let things run to such a length, that they cannot be put back again into their places at pleasure." So, instead of making any fuss about the matter, he was content with assuring himself that the rest of the Signory was not disposed to concur in the proposed measure, and, having given them their cue, caused the imprudent chief magistrate's proposal to be received with such a tempest of universal jeers and mockery, that the poor man, finding himself thus left alone, and made a public butt, altogether lost his head, and had to be sent home to his house in a state little better than idiotcy. A.D. 1458.

But the next Gonfaloniere save one, he who entered office in July of that year, was a very different sort of man. Luca Pitti, one of the richest—probably the richest man in Florence, after Cosmo de' Medici, the founder of the magnificent palace which still after so many generations of quite other ownership retains his name—was one of those members of the Medicean party who was most strongly disgusted with the consequences of the recent return to constitutional practices, and most entirely determined to restore at all hazards the former comfortable and pleasant state of things. And Luca Pitti was by no means the man to be scoffed and jeered into imbecility, or turned from his purpose by any such means;—a bold, active, enterprising, and able man.

Still old Cosmo, quietly and shrewdly watching the course of events, and the temper of the times, thought that Luca Pitti might be made as serviceable in his way and time as poor Matteo Bartoli had been. For, it began to seem to Cosmo, that the lesson which he had thought fit to allow the great men of his party to work out for themselves, was complete. Matters had gone far enough. The time had come when it was well to remember that "things should not be allowed to run to such lengths that they cannot be put back again in their places at pleasure."

A.D. 1458. But Cosmo had not the smallest intention of taking upon his own shoulders any portion of the risk or odium that might arise from the reassumption of the extraordinary powers which the party had for so many years wielded to their own comfort and profit, and which they in their restless discontent had been recently fools enough to abandon. No! But it was time that it should be done; and Luca Pitti seemed to be the right man for the doing of it.

Pitti accordingly, as Gonfaloniere, made several attempts to have the "*balia*" voted by the magistrates and councils in the ordinary and regular way. But the dangerous system of free election had filled the offices and council boards with a set of men who could not be got to sign away the power which had called them into existence. It was necessary to have recourse to a parliament,—supposed to be the free expression of its will by the entire people. So, on the 9th of August, 1458, Pitti, having first quietly filled the *Palazzo Pubblico* with armed soldiers, summoned the populace into the Piazza by the sound of the great bell, whose rarely-heard tones called them thither so surely, that to have the power of the bell in their hands was one of the most important prerogatives entrusted to the Signory. As soon as the piazza was tolerably well filled with a sufficient number of that class of the people which is most readily brought together by such means in the thoroughfares of a large city, the mouths of the streets opening upon the piazza,—some seven or eight in number,—were quietly occupied by bodies of armed men, destined to act merely as a gentle hint to the assembled crowd not to say "no," instead of "yes," to the propositions about to be made to them, and the farce of legislation by action of a free parliament of the universal citizens was performed.

It can hardly be necessary to observe, that the grand and picturesque piazza in the heart of the city, where in

the old times the real fathers and founders of the republic, —those leathern-jerkined citizens whose multiplication and deterioration Dante so much regretted;—used to assemble for the settlement of the affairs of the Commonwealth, either by words or blows, was no longer capable of containing the citizens of fifteenth-century Florence, had the really influential classes thought of going thither on such an occasion. But it may be useful to note the process by which the old Florentine democracy had grown into an oligarchy by the mere process of accretion, even if the free and independent citizens in whom theoretically the power of government was vested, had been in reality the rulers of the Commonwealth. How small a portion of the population, subjected to the rule of Florence, was that contained within the city walls! Yet, even according to the most thoroughly democratic theory of the constitution, those dwellers within the walls were the privileged legislators for all the subject provincials of the wide-spread territory. A.D. 1458.

The fact is a remarkable one. And the social tendencies and ideas which gave rise to it, ineradically inherent as they are in that municipal constitution of civilization, on which the whole social system of Italy is based, must be taken into account in all studies of the past in that country, as well as in all speculations concerning the future. According to the old Roman theory, which was as much a living portion of the minds of the Italians all through the middle ages as it was of the ancient inhabitants of the country, and which still lives in a great degree in the ideas and mental constitution of their descendants, the dweller within the walls of the "municipium," was the only *citizen*, socially and constitutionally speaking, as well as etymologically speaking. The "*contadini*," or inhabitants of the "*contado*," —the district lying around a town,—were neither counted nor accounted of any importance or value, —mere helots, for whom no place was provided by the

A.D. 1458. municipal system of civil liberties;—city liberties, that is to say; as we are reminded by etymology, ever the surest guide to the fundamental ideas that lie at the deep bases of human institutions and developments.

And the reciprocal feeling between the citizen and the "*contadino*," which has been generated by this relative position, may be traced throughout all the past story of Italian social life, and is not yet extinct.

The most thoroughly democratic theory of the Florentine constitution, therefore, did not require that for the due ratification of such a measure as that contemplated by Luca Pitti, any heed should be taken of those who dwelt outside the walls of the city. The citizens were supposed to be all assembled in the *piazza* by sound of bell, and there freely to express their will in the last resort respecting any part of the constitution according to which they chose to live. The degenerate representation of this primitive forum was the gathering of a crowd of rapscallions, the scum of the city, hemming them in with armed men, and then bidding them shout "yes" to certain propositions, which they assuredly did not understand, and probably did not even hear.

This was the farce of a parliament, which Cosmo had not permitted Matteo Bartoli to play, but which he did think fit to allow Luca Pitti to play in August, 1458, for the reassumption of the extraordinary powers which the Medicean party, who had waxed fat till they kicked, had so inconsiderately put out of their hands. So the crowd shouted; the "*balia*" was duly granted; all the offices were at once filled with men who could be trusted to be sufficiently pliant in the hands of the real aristocracy of the party; and, "in order to inaugurate with terror that government which they had begun by force,"* certain

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 154.

men, who had rendered themselves obnoxious during the recent interregnum of liberty, were exiled, and others condemned to prison. A.D. 1458.

Still, as "liberty" was supposed now as ever by others and by themselves to be the dearest aspiration of the Florentine heart, and was at all events sufficiently so, to be made the object of "a good cry," the citizens were gratified by being told that the members of the Signory, who had hitherto been called "*Priori delle arti*" (which was exactly what they in fact were,—the wardens or *first men* of the different guilds), should henceforward be called "Priori di Libertà;" so that, says Macchiavelli, "they might at least preserve the name of the thing they had lost." Further, the new government showed their care for the dignity of the constitutional officers and offices of the Commonwealth, and the zeal for the popular cause, by enacting that whereas the Gonfaloniere had hitherto sate in council at the right hand of the other members of the Signory, he should thenceforward sit in a more conspicuous and honourable place in the middle of them. In order, also, that the recent change might assume in genuine legitimate and right divine fashion, a religious sanction, a solemn *Te Deum* and procession were ordered to be performed in celebration of it.

And the immediate consequence of the *coup d'état* thus successfully accomplished, was that Luca Pitti, the author of it, found himself the most powerful man in Florence; always, of course, second to, and, as it were under the protection and authority of, Cosmo de' Medici, a recognised member of whose party Pitti had always been. His reputation, says Macchiavelli, "became so great, that it might be said that it was not Cosmo, but Messer Luca who governed the city." It is curious to observe, how rapidly and easily the language of the Florentine historians, following that of the talkers and contemporary writers of

A.D. 1458. the day, has glided down from horror of the "*governo di un solo*" to talk as if the government of the city by Cosmo de' Medici was a recognised and legitimate thing, the only strangeness being that this government should have slipped from his hands into that of his lieutenant Pitti.

But the fact was that Cosmo was rapidly becoming too old and infirm to take that personal part in the management of public affairs which he had hitherto taken. His son Pietro had never been capable in any way of filling that place in the city, and in the estimation of the citizens, and of foreign governments, which his father had held. He had from a very early period of his life been a victim of gout; and he also, as well as his father, was rapidly becoming too infirm to take any very active share in public affairs. Macchiavelli says that he was "a good man," but that he failed to inspire any great confidence in the members of the Medicean party. His son Lorenzo, who was destined not only to recover, but greatly to advance and increase the prestige of the family greatness, and to make a yet more notable progress than his grandfather had made in the work of raising himself from the rank of a private citizen in a republic to that of the despotic ruler of a monarchy,—Lorenzo, hereafter to be "the Magnificent," was at this time only ten years old, having been born in 1448.

Under these circumstances Luca Pitti rose into greatness, and "became so confident" that he began to build two residences, a villa in the country, and the celebrated Palazzo Pitti. The words marked as a quotation are those used by Macchiavelli in speaking of Luca Pitti's building enterprises;* and they curiously illustrate the feeling, often to be met with in various parts of the old Florentine life, that the outward and public manifestation

* Ammirato says that Pitti "ebbe l' ardire," had the daring, to build two residences. Lib. xxiii. Gonf. 1003.

of great wealth, was an offence against the body of the citizens well deserving and likely to produce the downfall of him who indulged in it. The *possession* of great wealth, joined to a frugal use of it, or the liberal expenditure of it on strictly public objects, conciliated respect. But any such use of it as tended to make the private life of its possessor manifestly more magnificent than that of his peers, was held to be imprudent, and felt to be odious. And *prudence* was the most highly esteemed of all the virtues in ancient, and perhaps also in modern Florence. A.D. 1458.

But Luca Pitti was betrayed by his rising fortunes into the audacity of founding that certainly princely pile, which has served as the residence for a line of despot princes. And the Florentines, his contemporaries, resented it as much as if they could have foreseen the purpose which the heaped-up stones were destined to serve. No citizen, not even the Medici themselves, had ever dreamed of building for themselves a mansion on anything like a similar scale of grandeur; and Pitti is accused of having used means of all kinds, many of them far from creditable, for the advancement of the work. Not only did he accept from anybody, who would bring them to him, materials for the work, but even entire communities and districts gave him assistance, of course expecting some return in some shape from a magistrate who had the government of the master commune of Florence in his hands. Still graver accusations than these, also, were current respecting the man *confident* enough to build a palace bigger than any Florentine had ever possessed before. It was asserted that brigands, thieves, and outlaws were received within the rising walls, and permitted to find a safe asylum there on the sole condition of making themselves useful in carrying on the work.

But Messer Luca Pitti lost no time in gaining the hatred

A.D. 1458. of his fellow-citizens, as soon as the "parlamento" had put the power into his hands; and he rode roughshod over the city, in a manner that it may well be believed Cosmo de' Medici would not have permitted, had he not been prevented by his rapidly increasing infirmities from taking any part in the active management of public affairs. The violences of which this deputy-tyrant was guilty, were not indeed worse than those which had often marked the conduct of a successful faction in Florence towards its conquered enemies, or than those which the subsequent tyrants of the house of Medici practised on the subject Florentines. But Cosmo had acquired his ascendancy by other means, and would assuredly not have risked it, as it was risked by the high-handed violence of Luca Pitti.

The annalist Cambi gives a long list of the names of the citizens and families who were exiled, and fined. Many of those, who had previously been banished, and against whom no new accusations of any kind were brought, were arbitrarily condemned to new and increased periods of exile. Five citizens are named by Cambi as having been decapitated for "causes of state." The amount of lawless persecution, which he had to record, was such that the ordinarily impassive and gentle Cambi is roused out of his usual jog-trot gossip into exclaiming: "Let those, who read this, learn never to grant a '*balia*'—(or commission with extraordinary powers),—and never to allow a parliament. Better to die sword in hand, than to permit a tyrant to be raised up over the city!" Well said, Cambi! But the sequel is suggestive of the quality of that love of liberty which was to be found at Florence, and of the causes that led to the extinction of it. Never allow the rise of a tyrant, says Cambi; "*for* in a short time a tyrant abases those who have made him great, and loves to raise new men from the most ignoble of the city, who may be interested in maintaining him in his position, from fear of

sharing his downfall." * Were it not, therefore, that a tyrant cannot be trusted to make his own party the sharers in his greatness, it would be a prudent and expedient step to support a despot of one's own party. So wholly did the mediæval Italians fail to perceive that the equal freedom of all was necessary to the permanent freedom of any portion of the community. A.D. 1460.

It was, however, to this unconstitutionally created government that Florence owed the rare felicity of remaining at peace amid the wars which, in the year 1460, were again vexing Italy. The war which then broke out was in a great measure due to Florence: for she had been mainly instrumental in first bringing the Angevine pretender to the crown of Naples into Italy; and now it was the return of his son Giovanni d'Anjou to prosecute that claim against Ferdinando, the son of Alfonso, who had succeeded his father on the throne of Naples in 1458, which once more lighted up war in the peninsula. For once Florence determined to keep out of it; but it is curious that she was led to do so, rather by the strength of her attachment to Sforza, the new Duke of Milan, than by the wisdom of her government.

Each of the contending parties sent ambassadors to Florence in 1460, demanding the assistance of the Republic in the prosecution of his claim. At first the government decreed that, for the sake of the old friendship between the Commonwealth and the house of France, the French pretender should be assisted with a subvention of eighty thousand florins a year, as long as he should be engaged in the conquest of Naples. Of course this would have produced war with the claimant of the Aragonese dynasty. But by the advice of Cosmo de' Medici it was determined to suspend the publication of this decree, till it

* Cambi, *op. cit.*, Deliz. Erudit. Tosc. tom. xx. p. 363.

A.D. 1460. should be known what the Duke of Milan intended to do in the matter.

Sforza also, like Florence, had been formerly an ally of the Angevine pretender; but that was in the days when he was struggling to attain the position he now held. Now he had taken his place among the sovereigns of Italy, and had, as has been seen, contracted ties of marriage with the Neapolitan sovereigns of the house of Aragon. He not only therefore did not approve of,—or, as Ammirato more strongly phrases it,* would not consent to,—the proposed Florentine subsidy, but declared that he had resolved on supporting the reigning dynasty with all his power. He had also induced the Pope to embrace the same side, having convinced the Holy Father that he, Sforza, was not induced to adopt that line of conduct merely from considerations of family connection, but from a conscientious belief that it was best to do so for the repose and tranquillity of Italy. And there can be little doubt that the veteran politician, whose sagacity had contributed almost as much as his military capacity to win for him the place he had attained, judged rightly and wisely on this occasion.

It was determined therefore in Florence, when this resolution of Sforza became known, to annul the decree for a subsidy to John of Anjou; and ambassadors were sent to both the litigant parties, charged to represent, in the most courteous phrase to each of them, that the Commonwealth of Florence was so much oppressed by debt, that it found itself unable to afford assistance to him in his views. Ferdinand of Aragon sent another embassy to Florence, strongly urging the Republic to assist him, and endeavouring to lead the government to see not only that the terms of the league made with his father at the time of the late general pacification of Italy obliged Florence to grant him

* Ammirato, lib. xxiii. Conf. 1114.

the aid he required, but that on all grounds of policy that course was for the general advantage of Italy. But Florence remained firm in her determination to hold altogether aloof from the war in Naples, and was encouraged in doing so by the example of Venice, which had adopted a similar line of policy. A.D. 1460.

This unusual prudence, however, did not avail to save the deeply-indebted city from all extraordinary drains upon its purse. A Papal visit was almost as costly as a war. And just before the decision to remain neutral in the Neapolitan contest had been affirmed, the new Pope, Pius II.,—that same Æneas Silvio Piccolomini whom we have seen haranguing at the gates of Florence in the character of Secretary to the Emperor Frederick III.,—chose to pay Florence a visit, and was, of course, received with all the magnificence which the Commonwealth was wont to display on such occasions. Instead of riding on a magnificently caparisoned mule, however, as his predecessors had done on similar occasions, Pope Pius II., it seems, was carried on a litter covered with brocade from the gate of Florence to his lodgings at Santa Maria Novella. He was carried thus by four great lords, who happened at that time to be in Florence,—Gismondo de' Malatesta, lord of Rimini; the lord of Faenza, the lord of Forli, and another: upon which unusual proceeding Cambi remarks, sullenly, that "the business was characterised by pride and not by holiness, and it cost us a treasure!"*

I suspect, however, that the Florentines, as represented by their very competent representative Giovanni Cambi, were not so much out of temper at the great cost of the Papal visit as at the honour of carrying him through the streets of their own city, and at their own expense, being arrogated to themselves by four grandee strangers, instead of falling to the lot of their own citizens.

* Cambi, *op. cit.*, Deliz. degli Erud. Tosc. tom. xx. p. 369.

A.D. 1460. The cost of this visit of Pius II. to Florence was very greatly increased by its having chanced to coincide with a visit from the young son and heir of Duke Sforza, the Count John Galeazzo Sforza, a lad of fifteen years old. He came with a retinue of three hundred and fifty horsemen and fifty-six "carriages."* He was lodged in the palace of Cosmo de' Medici, and all his expenses defrayed by the Republic from the moment of his setting foot on the territory of the Commonwealth.

The hospitalities to be shown to Pope Pius, and those which were adapted to the young Sforza, were not altogether of the same kind; and it must be owned that the gay doings recorded,—though it is over the money spent on the Pope that Cambi groans,—seem to have been more calculated to give pleasure to the latter than to the former. The space, we hear, of the *Mercato Nuovo* was enclosed with scaffolding superbly covered with arras, and a magnificent ball was there given in honour of the "temporal guests, though some of the Cardinals were there," says Cambi. It must be understood that the notion of giving a ball for the recreation of any specially-honoured guest implied at that time, not that the guests should dance, but that dancing should be performed by others for their amusement. Upon this grand occasion, when the heir to the Duchy of Milan was the principal person to be amused, but when, as Cambi informs us, several of the Cardinals in the suite of the Pope could not refrain from coming to see the sight, "sixty young Florentines of the most distinguished families of the Commonwealth," those being selected who were "the most apt at dancing," performed the *ballata*, together with a number of "very beautiful young girls skilled in dancing." The young men were "richly adorned with pearls and jewels;" and "all of them

* "Chariaggi." Cambi, *loc. cit.*

changed their dresses many times in the course of the entertainment." It was estimated that the spectators of this ball were not less than sixty thousand persons "in the course of the day;" an expression which, while it makes the statement more credible, by intimating that all that immense concourse of persons were not supposed to have been gathered together at the same time, shows us also that this great festival took place by day, and not, as our habits would lead us to suppose, by night. A.D. 1460.

Then there was a great jousting match in the Piazza Santa Croce, offered "to the temporal lords, although many of the ecclesiastics went to it." And there was a grand "hunt," as it was termed, in the Piazza della Signoria. This "hunt" in a flagstone paved square in the heart of a great city, surrounded with lofty buildings on all sides, was managed in the following manner. All the streets into the piazza were closed, and the whole space surrounded by scaffolding to protect the doors and windows. Into the area thus prepared were turned loose two lions, and two horses, and four bulls, and two buffaloes, and a cow and a calf, a boar, three very large wolves, and a giraffe, together with twenty men, and a large wooden ball, so constructed that a man, entirely concealed and protected, walked inside it, and caused it to roll in whatever direction he pleased. This contrivance was intended "to enrage the beasts." But by reason of the great noise of the cries of the assembled multitude, "the lions remained half stupefied, and a great number of people were mingled together on the piazza; and the lions stood among them like lambs. The preparations were immense, and cost a vast sum; but gave very little gratification to the people."

Then, after a great banquet given in the Palazzo Pubblico by the Signory to all their noble guests, the city presented to the young Sforza two silver basins with the arms of the Commune of Florence engraved on them, and two

A.D. 1460. silver ewers to match, two comfit-stands equally of silver, and twelve silver goblets. The whole weighed a hundred and twenty-five pounds, and cost two thousand florins. Then at night there was a grand triumphal show of hunters. A large platform on wheels, drawn by two horses, was covered with rich cloths bearing armorial devices, and lighted up by a hundred and fifty huge torches. On this, grouped around a mast, which rose from the centre of it, at the summit of which there was a falcon in a net, there were twelve lads, of the principal families in Florence, splendidly dressed, who represented the hunters. Among these was the young Lorenzo de' Medici, then just eleven years old.*

But while the young heir to the Medicean wealth and greatness was amusing himself and the guests of his family rather than of Florence with this pageantry, poor old Cosmo, his grandfather, who had built up all this wealth and greatness, was sitting sadly enough in the splendid halls of the palace he had built at the bottom of the Via Larga, close to the church of San Lorenzo, with a magnificence excelling that of most of the royal residences of Europe. One would have said that from the time of his return from exile, he had enjoyed an amount of unbroken good fortune rarely granted to any man.

"He not only," writes Macchiavelli, "overcame the domestic opposition and civic rivalry of his enemies, but also conquered that of many foreign powers, and that with such rare felicity and prudence, that whoever opposed him lost his money and his time, if not his territory;—as the Venetians can well testify, who, as long as they were allied with him, were constantly victorious over the Duke Filippo Visconti, but, disunited from him, were as constantly beaten first by Filippo, and then by the new Duke Fran-

* Cambi, *loc. cit.*

cesco Sforza. And when they leagued with Alfonso against the Republic of Florence, Cosmo, by means of his credit, so emptied Venice and Naples of money, that they were constrained to make peace on such terms as were granted to them." A.D. 1460.

The notion of his wealth, resulting from the brief and general, but perfectly trustworthy notices of the same writer, seems to transcend all the ideas gathered from the sufficiently remarkable accumulations of riches of our own days. That statement, which has been just quoted, representing him as having forced a powerful kingdom and the richest commercial community of that age in alliance with it to make peace merely by drawing in the sums due to him, and—it must be supposed—causing those who were connected with him in business to do the same, is sufficiently startling. But Macchiavelli has more to say on the same subject.

"Cosmo had a higher renown and wider reputation than any citizen, not a man of arms, that Florence had ever possessed;—or, indeed, any other city. He not only surpassed every other man of his times in authority and wealth, but also in liberality and prudence. For among all the qualities that made him the first man in his country, the principal was his generosity and magnificence. The extent of his liberality became much more apparent after his death than it had been before; for when his son Pietro inquired into the state of his father's affairs, it was found that there was not a single citizen of any position to whom Cosmo had not lent large sums of money. Often he had done this unasked. When he heard that any noble citizen was in distress, he assisted him. His magnificence was shown also by the abundance of buildings undertaken by him. For he rebuilt from their foundations the convents and churches of St. Marco and St. Lorenzo,* and the

* This, however, was begun by Cosmo's father, Giovanni.

A.D. 1460. monastery of Santa Verdiana, in Florence; and St. Girolamo and the Badia, on the hill of Fiesole; besides a church of the Franciscans in the Mugello. Besides all this, he erected altars and chapels of exceeding splendour in the church of Santa Croce, in that of the Servites, in that of the Holy Angels, and at San Miniato; and furnished them richly with all things needed for the celebration of holy worship. To these sacred edifices must be added his own private residences, one of which in the city is a mansion befitting such a citizen; and four others in the country, one at Careggi,* one at Fiesole,* one at Cafaggiuolo, and one at Trebbio, are all palaces of royal magnificence rather than what might be expected to belong to a private citizen. And, as if it did not suffice him to be known throughout Europe for the splendour of his buildings, he erected a hospital for poor and infirm pilgrims at Jerusalem. And on all these buildings he spent an enormous quantity of money."

Nevertheless the last years of Cosmo's life were far from happy. *We* know how splendid an edifice of family greatness was subsequently raised on the foundations which Cosmo had laid with so much labour and such rare good fortune; but he, during those closing years of his career, had no such outlook into the future. The mode in which the government was conducted by the leading men of his party, when he was too old and too infirm to take any part in the management of it, was not such as he could look on without misgiving. The authority, which he had enjoyed to a greater degree than any other citizen who had ever lived in Florence, had been based entirely on affection and popularity. And the men, who now were ruling Florence in his name, were rapidly throwing away all the capital in this kind that he had been so carefully accumulating

* Both of these are now the property of Englishmen.

during a lifetime. Then the prospect within his own home was not a reassuring one. His eldest son, Pietro, was incapable both in body and mind, and was not likely to survive his father long. His children were mere lads, too young as yet for it to be possible for the old steersman, who had so long held the helm of the Medicean bark, and from whose hand it was about to drop, to judge how far it might be hoped that they would be capable of continuing the work for which he had lived and laboured. And even if Cosmo could have known what a successor he left in that boy, who was miming in the street pageant while he lay dying in the great palace he had built, there was the bitterness of knowing that death was too quick for him; of feeling, as so many other usurpers of power have felt in like circumstances, that the interval between his own approaching end, and the time when the weak hand of the immature heir to his greatness should be strong enough to grasp the inheritance left him, would be fatal to the fabric built up with so much difficulty, care, and anxiety. A.D. 1463.

But it was not till quite the end of his career that the full weight of his disappointment fell upon him. Pietro had not been Cosmo's only son. He had another named Giovanni, the date of whose birth is not known. He was not afflicted in the manner his elder brother Pietro was, and his father's hopes had rested on him. He was married to Maria Ginevra degli Albizzi, a lady of the house which had been so bitterly hostile to that of Medici, but of a younger branch of it, which had separated itself from the political faith and had escaped the fate of the rest of the family. But Giovanni died childless in 1463, the year before the death of his father. And it was then that, as Macchiavelli tells us,* the old man, causing himself to be carried through the immense palace he had built for

* Macchiavelli, *op. cit.* vol. ii. p. 162.

A.D. 1464. himself, said, as he heaved a deep sigh, that his house was all too large for his shrunken family.

It is curious, as an indication of the intensity of the desire which we have seen to have been a national passion in the Florentines, to find it recorded that Cosmo's last years were embittered by the thought that he had failed in adding Lucca to the territory of the Commonwealth. It would seem that he had always cherished the hope that he would at length succeed in obtaining that object of his burning desire by means of his friend and ally Sforza. Sforza, when he was still struggling for his own place among the great ones of the earth, and had urgent need of the support, and specially of the money of Cosmo de' Medici, had promised that when he should be Duke of Milan he would use his power to subjugate Lucca, and finish the task he had failed to perform when besieging that city as general in the service of Florence. But when the great prize had been gained, and the soldier of fortune, whose life from his youth upwards had been passed in the camp amid the fatigues of war, had become Duke of Milan, he began to have a very lively sense of the blessings of peace, and the responsibility of disturbing it for the gratification of any other ambition than his own. All Cosmo's entreaties could not move him to undertake a war against Lucca; and this was another cause of disappointment and unhappiness to the dying Florentine. It was at his villa of Careggi, a beautiful spot in the Valdarno, about three miles from Florence, in the direction of Prato, that Cosmo died on the 1st of August, in the year 1464, the 75th of his age.

Macchiavelli tells us that he was an olive-complexioned man, of a venerable appearance, devoid of erudition, though so much a lover and patron of learning and learned men, but exceedingly eloquent by nature, and full of innate shrewdness and prudence.

Whatever may be considered to have been the tendency of the political life and acts of this, the real founder of the Medicean dynasty, it cannot be denied that he was really and greatly beloved by the Florentines;—that the whole city grieved when he was laid to his rest with an immense pomp in the church of San Lorenzo;—and that the decree which confirmed to him the title already popularly given to him of "Pater Patriæ," spoke the genuine sentiments and wishes of the people. It must be borne in mind moreover that if Cosmo bought the citizens of Florence to be subjects of a master instead of self-governed freemen, he bought those who, as Niccolò da Uzzano had already said in the time of the previous generation, were looking out for a purchaser. A city filled with men so minded did not deserve and could not have freedom. Despotism was sure to come; and it came, thinly veiled as yet, in the person of Cosmo. The throne, cunningly concealed as yet among artistically disposed draperies and deceptive coverings, was prepared; but at Cosmo's death there was nobody quite ready and fitted to step into it. A.D. 1464.

And true as it was, that the Florentines were ready to sell their liberties, as Niccolò da Uzzano had said, and that they had found a purchaser in Cosmo de' Medici,—thoroughly as the bargain had been completed, and sure as was the future downward progress of the social polity of Florence,—matters had not quite yet reached the pass at which the heritage of sovereignty left by Cosmo could be taken up by any heir as a matter of course. Cosmo had united in himself rare qualities, which had very specially fitted him for the evil work he had undertaken. It needed for the usurpation which Cosmo successfully accomplished, says Guicciardini, writing about a hundred years afterwards,—"it needed for the attainment of this end that there should be found in one and the same man an exceedingly rare combination of prudence, vast wealth, and

A.D. 1464. high estimation; and to this combination of qualities it was necessary that there should be added the operation of them during a long space of time, and the favouring assistance of a vast number of opportunities; in such sort, that it is all but impossible that so many circumstances, and qualities, and opportunities should be found cumulated in one individual. And therefore it is that there has never been seen in Florence but one Cosmo." *

* The above reflections are put by Guicciardini into the mouth of the aged and wise Bernardo del Nero, in a dialogue on the government of Florence, recently printed for the first time by Signor Canestrini in his not yet completed edition of the inedited works of the great historian, from the MSS. in the family muniment-room. See Opere Inedite di Francesco Guicciardini, vol. ii. p. 30.

BOOK VII.

FROM THE DEATH OF COSMO DE' MEDICI

TO

THE CONSPIRACY OF THE PAZZI, A.D. 1464—1478.

14 YEARS.

CHAPTER I.

Death of Pope Pius II.—Disastrous upshot of his crusade against the Turks —Intrigues in Florence on Cosmo's death—Dietisalvi Neroni—Luca Pitti assumes openly a position of hostility to Pietro de' Medici—Agnolo Acciaiuoli and Niccolò Soderini join him in his hostility—Treachery of Neroni—His perfidious advice to Pietro de' Medici—Unpopularity of Pietro—Marriage between Lorenzo, his son, and Clarice degli Orsini—Debate in Florence respecting the policy to be pursued towards the Duke of Milan—Party names in Florence—Views of the party of the Poggio, or those opposed to the Medici—Use of the public moneys by the Medici for the purposes of their trade—Arguments of the moderate section of that party—Aims of the more violent of the party of the "Poggio"—Inscription of all the members of the party—The secrets of the party betrayed to Pietro de' Medici—Inscription of the adherents of the Medici—Attempt of Tommaso Soderini in favour of moderate views—Causes of his failure—Conspiracy against the life of Pietro de' Medici—Betrayed to Pietro—This fact denied by Ammirato—Pietro escapes the snares laid for him—Attempts at pacification in the city—Luca Pitti deserts his fellow-conspirators—Pietro opposes all bloodshed in the city—He finally triumphs over the conspirators—Private conference between him and Luca Pitti—A new Signory favourable to the Medici come into office—A new parliament is called—A "Balia" is granted, and all the offices filled with thorough-going Mediĉean partisans—The conspirators are banished, with the exception of Luca Pitti—The Medici celebrate their victory with a "Te Deum"—Letter from Acciaiuoli to Pietro de' Medici, begging forgiveness—Pietro's answer—Luca Pitti remains in Florence—But is universally shunned, and is a ruined man.

INTERVALS of peace in Italy, it has been already remarked, were ever the periods most rife with internal dissension, and the dangers arising from it, within the city walls of Florence. The existence of foreign war, by causing a certain community of feeling and interest in the citizens, as well as from the necessity involved in the

A.D. 1464. efforts it required of having and obeying a strong government at home, always to a greater or less degree lulled and quieted for a time internal discord. Those jealous strivings among the citizens for pre-eminence, and that violent resistance of the masses, hopeless of pre-eminence for themselves and constantly striving in the name of liberty to prevent the attainment of pre-eminence by others, had already well-nigh produced their necessary result, of rendering the people as little desirous as capable of enjoying or understanding real law-ordered and law-abiding liberty. And now, at and after the death of Cosmo, a period of general peace in Italy of unusual duration left the Florentines at full leisure for the intrigues and divisions and heartburnings which the death of such a citizen as Cosmo, leaving so incompetent an heir, was well calculated to foster.

Pope Pius II. died seventeen days only after Cosmo, and his death put a sudden end to all those enthusiastic preparations for war against the Turks—so ill-considered as to be almost childish—which had, in the absence of Italian war, acted in some degree as a derivative for evil humours which, denied any such vent, remained as additional elements of mischief at home. It seems probable that the end of poor Pius II. was hastened, if not caused, by the lamentable break-down of the expedition which he had so much at heart. He had gone to Ancona to superintend the embarkation of the multitude he had persuaded to undertake the crusade, and to send them off with his Pontifical blessing to their holy work. The Venetians had promised to supply ships for the purpose. And the lettered and erudite Pontiff had doubtless fired his imagination by picturing himself standing with outstretched crozier-laden hands, to bless the expedition from the steps of the singularly and magnificently situated church of Ancona. Firm on its ancient heathen foundations, once those

of a temple to Venus, the venerable fane braves every tempest from the unresting Adriatic, and looks out from the summit of its lofty headland over the narrow sea even to the shores of the paynim land to which the crusading host were bound; and we may easily believe that the classic-nurtured Pope had, in imagination, pictured himself standing in front of that venerable pile, "quem Dorica sustinet Ancon," and sending thence his new army of crusaders to roll back the tide of war which had so long menaced Christendom with its infidel triumphs. He had hoped thus to immortalize his pontificate by the realization of a dream that had more or less broken the rest of every Father of the universal Church from the days of the first crusade until his own. A.D. 1464.

And it will be admitted that there was wherewithal to fire a Papal enthusiasm in such an imagination.

But it might have been supposed that Pius II. might have acquired, as secretary to an emperor, some such share of that insight into the practical working of the world's affairs in which most of the occupants of St. Peter's seat have been so lamentably and so necessarily deficient, as would have sufficed to save him from the bitter mortification which fell upon him, and the partakers in the proposed expedition from all the misery that overtook them. No necessary provision whatever had been made for feeding the multitude who had been persuaded to throng to Ancona; and the perfectly inadequate means which the town and the surrounding country afforded were soon utterly exhausted. The Venetians failed in their promise, or at all events kept it only perfunctorily by sending one or two galleys, ridiculously insufficient for the purpose in view. Matthias, King of Hungary, and Charles, Duke of Burgundy, who had promised to take the command of the expedition, did not make their appearance. "So that the Pope, being old and infirm, died in the midst

A.D. 1464. of these troubles and confusion; and after his death every one returned to his own home."*

And Italy was left once again in peace; and Florence at liberty to give all her attention to the quarrels of her leading citizens over the heritage of power and influence which the death of Cosmo had left to be scrambled for.

One of the closest of his friends and most trusted of his counsellors had been Messer Dietisalvi Neroni. Cosmo, on his death-bed, had specially desired and counselled his son Pietro to avail himself of his aid and advice both in the management of the immense variety of private business connected with his almost world-wide traffic and vast possessions, and in the guidance of his political conduct, and Pietro was disposed to place perfect trust in his father's old friend.

Very little time after the death of Cosmo was needed to make Pietro feel that he should need both friends and counsel. It has been seen that Luca Pitti had been disposed, even during Cosmo's life, to arrogate to himself a position and assume an independent line of political action, in a manner on which he would not have ventured, had the great head of the party been less incapacitated by years and infirmities; and when Cosmo was gone, Pitti threw off the mask entirely. He was a bold, energetic, and violent man, who, though utterly devoid of that far-seeing prudence and moderation which had been the special characteristics of Cosmo, and had alone enabled him to reach and maintain himself in the position he had attained, was yet in every point of view a more capable man than poor gouty Pietro; and he could not tolerate the thought of appearing in the Commonwealth only, as it were, as his lieutenant, and assuming the management of the State for him and in his interest. Luca Pitti's hope

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit., v. ii. p. 167; Ammirato, lib. xxiii. Conf. 1039.

and determination, on the contrary, was to secure the heritage of Cosmo's power and reputation for himself. A.D. 1465.

And there were two other leading citizens, of those who had always hitherto been members of the Medicean party, who were equally determined to put an end to the ascendancy of that family. These were Agnolo Acciaiuoli and Niccolò Soderini. The first was moved by personal resentment against the Medici, because Cosmo had decided against him in a dispute which had been referred to his arbitration; the other, Soderini, was more honestly desirous of a return to a free and constitutional government.

These two citizens, therefore, joined Pitti openly in his avowed hostility to Pietro de' Medici; but the three were also joined secretly by Dietisalvi Neroni, a more dangerous enemy than either, both because he was supposed to be a friend, and because he was the most able and wily politician of the party. He, too, aspired to step into the position left vacant by Cosmo, and by no means intended to practise the basest treachery and ingratitude for the profit of another. Luca Pitti was in his estimation a rude and ready tool, who might be advantageously used to do the rough work that had to be done, and of whom it would not be difficult to disembarrass himself when the fitting time should come.

The first thing Pietro did, in obedience to the dying advice of his father, was to put the books containing all the manifold details of Cosmo's business transactions and his private fortune into Neroni's hands, and to request him to examine them and ascertain the state of the Medicean affairs. Messer Dietisalvi did so, and reported to him that he found wide-spread disorder, and that the only step that could put things right would be to call in the sums of money due to his father. This advice was most perfidious. The list of Cosmo's creditors included almost every man of any influence in the city; and they had become such under

A.D. 1465. circumstances that perhaps, in a great measure, justified them in feeling that they were hardly dealt with in being suddenly called upon to restore at a short notice what had been lent to them. Pietro, however, fell into the snare, acted as Neroni advised him, and by doing so at once lost all the affection and popularity which his father had laboured so hard and so long to gain. Unfortunately for Pietro too, it so happened that several failures of commercial firms occurred in Florence just about that time. It is possible that these, or some of these, may have been more or less brought about by the sudden calling in of the Medicean debts. But whether it was so or not, Pietro got all the credit of it. Of course the bankrupts were glad to attribute their misfortune to any cause beyond their own control, and the cry rose from one end of Florence to the other, that the avaricious hardness of this poor-spirited son of a splendidly-munificent father was ruining the city.

There was another cause also which contributed at the same time to the unpopularity of Pietro de' Medici, and to the designs of those who were bent on his ruin. It was known that he was arranging a marriage for his son Lorenzo with Clarice, a daughter of the noble Roman baronial house of Orsini; and such an alliance was next to high treason in the eyes of his jealous republican fellow-citizens. It will be remembered how Cosmo's ambition had hankered after a marriage of the same kind for his son; how the feeling of the Florentines had declared itself on that occasion; and how prudent Cosmo drew in his horns, and married his son to a simple citizen's daughter. Pietro did not permit his wishes to be baulked by any such prudent considerations; and the marriage between Lorenzo de' Medici and Clarice degli Orsini was solemnized. The ill-feeling produced by this alliance was so strong in the city that the little knot of four who were plotting the overthrow

of the Medicean power thought that they had the game in their own hands. "What could a Florentine citizen want," —it was indignantly asked,—"with a noble Roman lady for his daughter-in-law? If his fellow-citizens were not good enough for him to intermarry with them, it must be that he looked on them, or wished to look on them, not as his equals, but as his subjects. At all events he could not expect to have them for his friends!" A.D. 1466.

Other circumstances contributed also about the same time to bring these discontents to a crisis. The term for which the recent "*Balia*" had been granted at the instance of Luca Pitti expired; and Francesco Sforza, the Duke of Milan, died in March, 1466. The tendency of the first of these incidents to bring matters to a crisis in Florence is easily perceived and understood; and the debate and difference of opinion as to the policy to be pursued by the Commonwealth towards the new Duke contributed powerfully to the same result.

There was in reality, it must be owned, great room for doubt as to what might be the wisest conduct of Florence in respect to Galeazzo* Sforza, the new Duke of Milan. He sent ambassadors to Florence immediately on the death of his father, desiring that all the treaties and stipulations which had existed between his father and the Commonwealth should be renewed and confirmed with him. Now among these was an engagement for the port of Florence to pay a considerable annual sum to Sforza. Was this payment to be continued? Pietro and his friends were very anxious that it should be still paid — intelligibly

* So christened, remarkably enough, three years before his father succeeded to the dukedom, on the extinction of the Visconti. Galeazzo was an old name in the Visconti family; but had never been known in that of Sforza. The choice of it by Francesco Sforza indicates clearly enough his determination at that time that this son of his should come to be Duke of Milan.

A.D. 1466. enough. Of course it was as desirable for him, as it had been for his father, to have a powerful neighbouring prince, all whose sympathies and tendencies were naturally in favour of despotism, for his private friend;—a friend conscious that a large slice of his income depended on the ascendancy and pre-eminence of the Medici in their own city. But was this close connection equally desirable for Florence? Might not the continuance of this payment assume a disagreeable likeness, or grow in time, if it was permitted to become established, to assume a likeness, to a tribute? At all events it was an onerous payment; and there did not seem to be any good reason why the Commonwealth should be any longer saddled with it. Francesco Sforza, the father, had served Florence long and with tolerable fidelitly, as faith went in those days; had received its wages, and might have been considered to deserve a continuance of them in guise of a retiring pension. But why should any payment be continued to his son, who had no military reputation to justify the idea of engaging his services as general of the armies of the Republic?

On the other side, Pietro and his friends argued that it would be dangerous to let the good understanding and friendship which had existed between the late Duke and Florence come to an end; that the consequence of such a breach would infallibly be either that Venice, seeing the young Duke unsupported and isolated, would attack and crush him; or that Venice and Milan would form a close alliance, to the detriment, and perhaps danger of Florence. And it is undeniable that very serious consideration was due to the views of those who took that side of the argument.

Unfortunately, it was little likely that the question, important as it was, should be debated in Florence at that time with any really patriotic wish to arrive at the wisest solution of it. Both parties in the State supported their

own views violently, for other reasons than those which they avowed. And the incident served to divide the city into two hostile camps, more visibly and widely divided than ever. Party names too, as usual in Florence, were at once coined for the designation, and consequently the demarcation and wider separation, of the adverse factions. The opponents of the Medici were called the party of the "*Poggio*"—or mountain—because the house of Luca Pitti, where they were wont to assemble, was, as every visitor to Florence in these days will well remember, situated on the lowest slope of the hill which in subsequent times was topped by the fortress of St. George. The Medici and their friends were called the party *del Piano*—of the plain—because the palace of the Medici was situated in the flat part of the city. Of course the invention of these names did more among the mass of the citizens to separate them into two camps, than all the real difference of opinion which existed between them. And the two parties began to muster their friends, and hold meetings for the consideration of the policy to be adopted. A.D. 1466.

The men of the mountain, composed as that party had from the first been of individuals who, if they all agreed in the wish to put an end to the extraordinary power of the Medici, yet differed widely in their views, wishes, and character, were similarly divided in opinion as to the line to be pursued by them. There was a more moderate and genuinely constitutional section among them who wished for the supremacy of the law, and desired to use no unlawful means for the securing of that object. They urged that the fortunate circumstance of the expiration of the "*Balia*" sufficed, if duly taken advantage of, to secure all they wanted. All that was necessary, they insisted, was to prevent the renewal of any such extraordinary powers. Not only would the immediate point of returning to a government in the hands of constitutionally-elected magis-

A.D. 1466. trates be obtained, but by the natural action of such a government all danger of a return of the Medici to their present position, or to any such overweening greatness as could be dangerous to the Commonwealth, would be prevented. For the vast resources of the Medici were so tied up in various investments and world-wide speculations, that there was every reason to believe that if Pietro was prevented, as he of course would be by constitutionally-elected magistrates, from availing himself of the public moneys, he must assuredly fail and come to ruin. And there would be an end of the Medicean wealth and reputation, and with them of all danger to the liberties of Florence.

It would seem, then, from the hint obtained from the line of the above argument, that Cosmo had availed himself of the public moneys and credit of Florence for the carrying on of his commercial speculations. For the suggestion that Pietro, if left to occupy the quasi-irresponsible position at the head of the Commonwealth, which his father had filled, would use the public money, is put forward, not as a startling dishonesty of which he might be tempted to be guilty, but quite as a matter of course. Now the hint thus picked up will perhaps appear, especially to our merchant princes of the present day, to throw a very explanatory light on the apparently almost incredible accounts of the Medicean wealth. Given a condition of things in which money was worth at least ten per cent., and the power of utilizing the public funds and credit of one of the richest commercial states in Europe, and, I fancy, more than a score or two of heads might be found within the sound of Bow Bells perfectly capable of realizing, with such means, as great results as Cosmo de' Medici realized.

It was further argued by the more moderate section of the party "*del Poggio*," that not only would this perfectly legal and constitutional line of action suffice to secure the

end in view without disturbance, revolutionary violence, or bloodshed,—which of course was the object of every good citizen,—but that the attempt to use violence would be more than anything else likely to defeat itself. Many in Florence would contentedly, or at least passively, see the ruin of Pietro de' Medici brought about by natural and legitimate causes, who would not see him openly attacked without moving in his defence. Moreover, the adoption of the surer and more legitimate, though slower method of securing his downfall would not, as violent measures assuredly would do, alarm him in such a manner as to lead him to seek to defend himself by gathering his friends around him. Or at all events, if he should take any overt measures of the sort for the strengthening and consolidating his party, when nobody was manifesting overt hostility against him, he would injure himself by the suspicion and jealousy which such a course would arouse. Whereas, if his opponents by overtly attacking him gave him an ostensible reason for so acting, he would be able to muster his strength without incurring that disadvantage. A.D. 1466.

And there can be no doubt that the counsels of this moderate section of the party of the "*Poggio*" were wise, as their object was honest and legitimate. But none of these arguments convinced the more violent of Pietro's enemies, because, in fact, their object was not that of the honest men who were associated with them. It was not the object of Luca Pitti or of Dietisalvi Neroni to restore constitutional government in Florence; they were each of them bent on securing for himself that anti-constitutional power which Cosmo had held, and which they were plotting to take from his son. These men insisted that the course proposed by the moderates was too slow; that time would operate in favour of Pietro, and not of them; that a Signory, chosen by his friends, would be sure to grant a renewal of the "*Balia*"; that that was the

A.D. 1467. moment to destroy him once for all, when the minds of many were inflamed against him by his recent impolitic conduct. The course they recommended was to provide secretly a sufficient force of armed men within the city; to bribe the Marchese of Ferrara, at that time commander-in-chief of the Florentine troops, not to act against them; and then to await the chance of a friendly Signory, and as soon as that should present itself, to make themselves masters of his person. The upshot of the debate, however, was that they should suspend all action till the incoming of the new Signory, and should then form their plans according to the character of the men who should compose it.

In the meantime it was agreed that a list should be made out of all the citizens who could be induced to sign a paper, declaratory of their hostility to the Medici. But the secretary of the meeting, to whom the making out of this list was entrusted, one Messer Niccolò Fedini, thinking that he could make more by selling the secret entrusted to him than by keeping it, laid the list, together with information of all that had passed at the meeting, before Pietro. The latter was not a little alarmed at the number and quality of the names of his enemies; and in order to ascertain what hope he might have of successfully resisting them, determined, by the advice of his most intimate friends, to cause a similar list to be made of those who were willing to pledge themselves to support him. The result, as far as numbers went, was very satisfactory; but the mischief was that many of those who had signed the latter paper were also among the subscribers of the former!

It was clear that these Janus-faced politicians were perfectly minded to be on the winning side, let that be which it might, and that to secure their support it was necessary to succeed.

The next Signory—that of March and April, 1467—had

Niccolò Soderini as Gonfaloniere at its head. He had a brother, Tommaso Soderini, who was a more mild and prudent man than his brother Niccolò, and who, though as desirous as his brother was of seeing a return to constitutional government in Florence, was a very intimate friend of Pietro de' Medici. He persuaded his brother, the Gonfaloniere, whom he knew to be actuated in his enmity to the Medici solely by a genuine love of liberty and free government, to make a new inquisition of the names of citizens entitled to vote at the elections of magistrates, so that the election purses might be filled with names favourable to free government, and that a return to constitutional practices might be thus attained without violence or disturbance. But the corruption of factious division and party feeling had too entirely taken possession of the citizens to make it possible for the constitution to be righted by any such simple means. Neither party in the State would lend their assistance to any such good work. The friends of the Medici were unwilling to let power escape from their hands without making an effort to retain it; and their opponents, with the exception of the few who, like the brothers Soderini, really wished for constitutional liberty on public grounds, were of course not anxious for a reformation which would have made revolution unnecessary, seeing that it was their hope that the result of such a revolution would be to transfer absolute power from the hands which had hitherto held it to their own. Especially they were unwilling that such a peaceful reformation should be consummated by Soderini, whose views they well knew were widely different from their own, and who, strengthened in reputation and credit by such a success, would have been the more able to withstand ultimately their own designs. The result was that Soderini's term of office passed away without anything having been done. Things at the conclusion of it were just where they were at the

A.D. 1467.

A.D. 1467. commencement; except that the hopes which many men had conceived, from the chief magistracy having fallen into the hands of a man of Soderini's known character, were shown to have been vain, and that he was in a corresponding degree discredited, and the views of the more violent of the party, who (except that their designs were, in a measure, avowed) may be called the conspirators, were confirmed.

It was determined therefore to have recourse to violence, and not only to compel, by the presence of armed men, the first Signory that might seem to them favourable for the purpose, to reform the State according to their wishes, but to put Pietro to death. It was remembered that when it had been determined to put an end to the power of Cosmo, and he was in the hands of his enemies, they had allowed him to escape with his life, contenting themselves with sending him into exile, and the conspirators needed not to remind one another of the consequences. So it was resolved that Pietro should die. It did not seem difficult to find a suitable opportunity for the accomplishment of this; for Pietro, suffering as he was from infirmity, was frequently carried in a litter to and fro from the city to his villa at Careggi.

The conspirators felt, however, that it would be necessary to have some strong support on which they could rely for their protection and for the control of the populace and the overawing of the Signory during the first moments of confusion and popular excitement which would follow the perpetration of the deed. For this purpose they had recourse to Ercole da Este, the brother of Borso, the Marchese di Ferrara, who was perfectly willing to undertake the work assigned to him.

Macchiavelli says that all these measures were reported to Pietro by Messer Domenico Martelli, and that Pietro, seeing that it was absolutely necessary to have recourse to

arms for his own defence, and feeling the importance of having some excuse for being the first to appeal to force, pretended to have received a letter from Giovanni Bentivoglio, Lord of Bologna, giving him information that armed men were marching in the direction of Florence. Ammirato says, on the contrary, that the coming of a letter from Bentivoglio with these tidings was no fiction at all; that Pietro first became acquainted with the machinations that were going on against him in this manner; and though the latter historian agrees in representing Pietro as having received information of the movements of the conspirators from Domenico Martelli, he places the date of that information later in the story. Comparing the two accounts together, and bearing in mind that Macchiavelli, though admirable for his general appreciations of the significance of the events he relates, and of the connection between political cause and effect, is by no means so accurate or careful a sifter of facts as the professional man of letters, Ammirato, I follow the latter, little doubting that his account—not ignoring, but denying as it does, the truth of that version of the facts given by Macchiavelli—is the more correct one.* Niccolò Valori too, in his life of Lorenzo de' Medici, writes under the impression that the letter was a genuine one. A.D. 1467.

I believe, then, that Pietro, being at the time at Careggi, did really receive from his friend Giovanni Bentivoglio, at Bologna, the letter, with which he hurried to Florence, showing it to his friends and the Signory as a motive for the steps he had taken for his protection. These steps were to get together as many armed men from his own and his friends' retainers in the immediate neighbourhood of the city as he could, and to send in all haste to a captain of the Duke of Milan, who happened to be then in the Romagna with 2500 cavalry.

* Macchiavelli, op. cit., v. ii. p. 176; Ammirato, lib. xxiii. Gonf. 1051.

A.D. 1467. Here was a small instance of the expediency of persons in the position of the Medici being on good terms with a neighbouring potentate, such as Sforza.

Nevertheless Pietro narrowly escaped a danger, which would probably have been fatal to him, on hurrying in from Careggi to the city; and his avoidance of it is related as an instance of the alert intelligence and boldness of the young Lorenzo, then in his eighteenth year. He had learned from some of the peasants that a body of armed men had been seen in the roads between Careggi and Florence, whereupon he persuaded his father to have himself carried in his litter by a roundabout way to the city, while he, riding on by the direct road, told the soldiers that his father was coming a little way behind him.

Pietro first showed the letter he had received to his friends, as a motive to them and an excuse for himself for getting together all the force they could, and then hurried with it to the Signory at the palace, demanding that they should do their duty and take means for preserving the peace of the city. The magistrates named Bernardo Corbinelli a commissary for the pacification of the city and the prevention of the entrance into it of any of the armed men called thither by either faction. They entreated both parties to lay down their arms, assuring them that a way should be found of terminating their differences by civil means, without recurring to force. But it was not likely that any such representations on the part of magistrates, very evidently weaker in authority and smaller personages than either of the party leaders between whom they were striving to mediate, would avail to induce men, who had committed themselves so overtly to violent measures, to put out of their hands the arms they trusted to, no longer now for the destruction of their enemies only, but for their own safety.

And both parties continued during the remainder of

that day, the 23rd of August, 1467, and the ensuing night, to increase the force at their disposal, and gather together their friends. And it was already clear that in consequence of having been the first to move within the city, the party of Pietro was the stronger. About two hours after nightfall Niccolò Soderini, who had collected some two hundred men or so of the lowest classes of the townsmen, went with them to the house of Luca Pitti, who seems either to have lost courage, or to have already so far listened to proposals made to him by Pietro, as to have become half-hearted in the matter. It is certain that communications had passed between him and Pietro. The latter endeavoured to disarm Pitti's hostility by flattering promises of all sorts for the future—promises which we may be very sure did not refer to any good intentions respecting the constitutional government of Florence, but rather to offers of sharing with him the profits of governing unconstitutionally; and by proposals for a family alliance by a marriage between a niece of Messer Luca with Giovanni Tornabuoni, a nephew of Pietro, whose mother was a Tornabuoni. A.D. 1467.

The consequence of these communications between the Medici and Pitti was that the latter refused to put himself on horseback, as Soderini urged, and come at once with him and all the men they could muster into the Piazza to attempt compelling the Signory to call a parliament and grant a "*Balia*" which should put all the power of the State into their hands. Soderini having found all he could say ineffectual to induce Pitti to move, left him, telling him that his conduct and the misplaced confidence he had been induced to repose in him, would be the ruin of both of them. Luca flattered himself that he had so managed as to escape scatheless himself, let the forces, which he had set in motion, work to what end they might; and whether the more honest and straightforward though violent man,

A.D. 1467. who had been his fellow conspirator, were ruined or not, was a matter of perfect indifference to him.

On the other hand, the friends of Pietro, persuaded that they had the greater amount of physical force at their disposal within the city, strongly urged him to permit them to cross the river into the trans-Arno quarter of Santo Spirito, and there fight it out with the supporters of the party of the Poggio, before the latter had time to induce the Signory to take any step that might be dangerous to the Medici and their power in the city. The district of the city beyond the Arno, forming the Quartiere of Santo Spirito, was the especial stronghold of the "*Poggio*" faction, both because the residence of Pitti, the "*Poggio*," from which they took their designation, as well as the palace of Soderini, was there, and the Gonfaloniere for the time being, Bernardo Lotti, was a Santo Spirito man, and their friend. But Pietro, a man of peace, unable, on account of his infirmities, to take any part in measures of active violence himself, and averse to bloodshed, utterly refused his consent to any such plan. Thus from the defection of Pitti on the one side, and the restraining authority of Pietro on the other, the night of the 23rd passed without any violence having been committed. Each party spent it in keen watchfulness, notwithstanding that, by the interference of well-meaning and peace-loving citizens, promises were exchanged between the two factions not to attack each other for the while.

Pietro, on his side, was contented with anything that would gain time. The Sforza cavalry were coming: they were 2500 in number; while those which Ercola da Este had sent to Pitti and his friends were stated in the letters Pietro had received to be only 1300; and, better still, the last days of the adverse Signory were melting away. The next Gonfaloniere must, according to turn, be a Santa Croce man, and the Medici had every reason to think that

the lot would in that quarter fall on a friend of their own. A.D. 1467.

The next morning's light brought reinforcements of armed men to the Medicean party. Messer Serristori and other friends were sending aid. Pitti, knowing that the opposite party was growing in strength, while his own was being weakened by divided counsels, was the more willing to listen to negotiations from Pietro; and thus the time passed till the 28th, the day on which the nomination of the new Signory took place.

The names of the incoming magistrates were soon known to both parties, and it was seen at once that they were friends of the Medici. It became clear, that for this time the hopes of the conspirators were at an end. They had let the right moment slip through their fingers; and now they could only hope that they had not committed themselves beyond what the traditional moderation of the Medici, which might be inclined to think clemency the best policy, would overlook. The members of the outgoing Signory and those of that newly elected met together, and summoned the leaders of both parties to their presence. Pitti, and most of those who had acted with him, obeyed the summons. Pietro, unable to appear in person, sent his sons Lorenzo and Giuliano, together with the leading men of his faction. And then, in the palace, in the presence of the old and incoming Signory together, the two parties made a solemn reconciliation, both sides promising to forget all causes of offence, and to send away the armed bands which they had brought into the city.

On the following day Pitti, with most of his friends, but without the staunch and honest republican Soderini, waited on Pietro, at his palace, and had an interview with him in his bed. There many civil things were said; Pietro protested how highly he had always valued his father's most esteemed friend, Messer Luca Pitti; Pitti declared that he

A.D. 1467. had been led away by the lies and false reports of malicious persons. And then there was embracing and "kissing on the mouth," and Pietro and Luca parted with "tears in their eyes." This was the official interview for the public. But it was noted that Messer Luca had forgotten to say something, and returned to the chamber of Pietro, where he remained for half an hour with no witness save Lorenzo and Giuliano, Pietro's two sons; Giuliano being then only thirteen years old—somewhat young, one would think, to have been trusted with what probably passed at that interview. But the trust seems to have been well placed. For the boy never blabbed; or at least, if he did, he did not so tell his father's secrets that they could be picked up by any of the numerous news-gossips, who were ever busy with their diaries in Florence. For history can tell nothing of what took place in Pietro's chamber during that half hour.

Soderini went, we are told, to Pitti on his return from this interview, and said to him, "You think you have made peace with Pietro de' Medici, do you? And you flatter yourself that you will be permitted to live in peace and comfort in this city, do you? How can you suppose that a few words can remove hatred and suspicion generated by rival pretensions to power, such as every day arm the hands of brother against brother, and of sons against their fathers? Do not let us run blindfold into the snare. We have yet two or three days. The Gonfaloniere during these days is with us. We have only to deal with a sick man, barely holding on to life,* and two lads just out of their childhood. Why not call our armed friends into the city, cause the Signory to summon a parliament, and create a "*Balia*," in our own sense?"

Pitti,—whether really vacillating, or whether, as seems

* "Holding his soul with his teeth" is the expression, as recorded by Ammirato, lib. xxviii. Gonf. 1051.

likely, acting in correspondence and connivance with Pietro, A.D. 1467. was, or feigned to be, once more persuaded by Soderini's representations,—wrote off to Ercole da Este to come on with the troops as fast he could, and gave out to all their friends in the city, that another attempt at securing a parliament under a Signory favourable to their own party was to be made.

But all these movements were reported to Pietro on his sick bed, as quickly as they were determined on, by Domenico Martelli and Niccolo Fedini.

Ammirato here relates an incident, of which no mention is found in Macchiavelli, and which certainly seems to have little probability to commend it to our belief. He says, that when Pietro received this information of Pitti's return to open hostility after this solemn reconciliation, and after all that passed—whatever it may have been—at that secret conference between them, he sent his son Lorenzo to remonstrate with him; and that the lad succeeded in so working upon the mind of the veteran intriguer and politician, that he induced him once again to abandon his projects of violence, to throw over his friends, and to remain quiet during the one or two remaining days of the existing Signory. The statement is in itself scarcely credible; and when the character of Pitti is remembered, and all that is known to have passed between him and Pietro, together with the certainty that something more did take place between them which is not known, is borne in mind, it will be hardly possible to avoid the conviction that there was a secret understanding between the Medici and Messer Luca, who must have been fully persuaded that the game he had intended to play was destined to be a losing one, and that the object of this understanding was the entire destruction of the rest of the party of the Poggio, as the price of his personal safety.

Such, at all events, was the upshot of the matter. Pietro

A.D. 1467. having tided over the duration of the Signory which was hostile to him, a Medicean Signory, with Roberto Leoni at its head as Gonfaloniere, came into office for September and October, 1467. The more violent of the Medicean party immediately rallied around them; and it was decided that the four leaders of the conspiracy, Pitti, Acciaiuoli, Neroni, and Soderini must be put to death; for that there was no hope of tranquillity for the State while they lived. This was the decision of Pietro's friends. But none, save his two sons, it will be remembered, had been present at the secret interview between him and Pitti. When the above decision was communicated to Pietro, he absolutely refused to hear of any bloodshed; but insisted that the old constitutional practice of calling a parliament should be followed.

The reader, however, by this time perfectly well understands in what sense this practice was constitutional, and how it operated to the suppression of all constitutional guarantees for liberty. Pitti had been equally anxious to call a parliament, when it would have assembled amid armed men supporting a Signory, who were prepared to use the powers to be granted by the parliamentary farce at his bidding. The Medici were equally ready to call a parliament, when the soldiers and the Signory were their creatures. Soderini and the real friends of free government had wished to have no parliament, but simply to trust for the needful reform of the government to the working of the elections of magistrates, according to legal forms. It is true that they had advocated the calling of a parliament when they found that there was no possibility of obtaining this, and that if they did not get a parliament in their interest, their opponents would succeed in calling one in theirs.

Pietro would have no illegal violence, but a parliament according to ancient Florentine constitutional practice. So the parliament was called;—the Piazza surrounded by armed men as usual, just as if that also was a portion of

the constitutional practice;—the crowd of ragamuffins, supposed to represent the entirety of the scot-and-lot paying citizens of Florence, flocked to the scene of action all as usual;—a "*Balia*" was asked, and granted by acclamation;—the Signory proceeded to name a sufficient number of thorough-going Medicean partizans as the members of this all-powerful board, and the juggle was complete. Despotism was quickly established, all according to ancient constitutional practices; and the "*Balia*" began to work with the most satisfactory smoothness and unanimity, or as Ammirato,—himself the subject of a despotism, and the favoured *protégé* of a despot—writes, with excellent naïveté: "Pietro bade them call a parliament of the people according to ancient custom, and create, for the remedy of these disorders, a *Balia*, which, consisting, as it naturally would of course, for the most part of their own friends, there would be no reason to fear that they would not with common accord provide for the tranquillity of everybody." * Yes! There never was any reason to fear in Florence that your "*Balia*," thus created, would not exhibit an admirable spirit of unanimity, and provide for the tranquillity of everybody in a manner more or less satisfactory to the objects of its care! Such was the case on the present occasion; and as it is impossible to tell the result better than in the amusingly complacent words of Ammirato, I continue to quote them. "This decision was carried into effect, and the Gonfaloniere having been told what he had to do, the people were called to parliament no later than the second day of his tenure of office. And it is certain that both Luca Pitti, and Dietisalvi Neroni were present. A *Balia* was taken—(he does not even say that it was *granted*)—arms were laid aside; and on the 6th of September eight citizens, together with the *Capitano del Popolo*, were named as

A.D. 1467.

* Ammirato, lib. xxiii. Gonf. 1052.

A.D. 1467. commissioners, and the provisions for the new magistracies were at once published by them. The first law was, that the purses for the election of the Signory should for ten years be held in hand.—In other words, that instead of going through the farce of drawing the names by lot from purses carefully filled with the names of the adherents of the dominant party, for fear the lot might fall on somebody not quite absolutely a creature of the wire-pulling ruler of the city, the Signory should be simply and avowedly appointed by him;—and then immediately after this came the names of those who were banished; Acciaiuoli and his sons to Barletta,* Neroni and his two brothers to Sicily, Soderini with his son Geri to Provence, all for twenty years; Walter Panciatichi to any place out of the Florentine territory for ten years."

And thus the quiet of all parties was provided for. But though these principal names are all that Ammirato in his comfortable optimism thinks it worth while to mention, they were by no means all whose absence was required to make the solitude which the Medici and their friends called peace. Giovanni di Neroni, then Archbishop of Florence, went into voluntary exile at Rome, "in order to avoid a worse evil. And many other citizens were sent off at once, banished to different places."† And there were other little indications that the Medici were beginning to do things in a genteel style, for all the world like princes of real quality. There is nothing so courtly-genteel and orderly as your "Te Deum" after a successful stroke of kingcraft! "Nor were they satisfied with this!" continues Macchiavelli, "but must needs order a procession to thank God for the preservation of the state, and the concord of the city, in the performance of which solemnity certain citizens were seized

* The letter quoted in a subsequent page would seem to show that their place of exile must have been Naples.

† Macchiavelli, ed. cit. lib. vii. vol. ii. p. 181.

and put to torture, and then some of them put to death, and some exiled." A.D. 1467.

There is a letter extant from Messer Agnolo Acciaiuoli to Pietro, excusing himself, begging for forgiveness, and to be allowed to return to his home, together with the Medici's reply, which latter is worth citing. It is worth noting, too, that the exile makes no pretence of applying to the magistrates whose sentence exiled him, and whose decision only could legally have anything to do with his position. A criminal might as well ask the hangman for a pardon! Acciaiuoli,—whose case it must be admitted was a bad one, as he and his had not only been the friends of Cosmo, but his dependants, factors, and trade-agents, enriched to their hearts' content by their connection with him, as all the many others who were similarly connected with the great firm, were enriched,—Acciaiuoli wrote direct to Pietro; and this is the substance of the answer he got, given correctly enough by Macchiavelli, though not exactly in the words absolutely used by Pietro, which may be found printed at length by Roscoe.*

"Your laughing there—(Acciaiuoli had said that he laughed at the tricks of fortune, or some such idle phrase) —is the cause why I am not weeping here. For if you were laughing at Florence, I should be weeping at Naples. I confess that you felt kindly towards my father; and you will confess that you were requited by him in such sort that the balance of obligation remains on your side, as much as deeds are better than words. Since, therefore, you were recompensed for the good, you cannot be surprised that you now reap the fitting reward for your evil. And your talk about love for your country is no excuse for you; for nobody will ever believe that this city has been

* Life of Lorenzo, Appendix, No. ix. It may be worth noting, however, that Pietro does decently keep up the form of supposing that it lay solely with the magistrates to pardon Acciaiuoli, and not with him, Pietro.

A.D. 1467. less beloved and profited by the Medici than by the Acciaiuoli. Live, therefore, where you are in dishonour, since you did not know how to live in honour here."

But the most notable example to be drawn from all this story, says Macchiavelli, is that of Luca Pitti. In truth, he was the first instance of the application of a policy frequently practised by the Medici in the coming years with singular dexterity and success. It consisted in so managing as to make their friendship and patronage a yet more fatal misfortune to a man than their enmity. It is a piece of polished and finished king-craft, which has frequently been made use of in other climes and times, but seldom with such perfectly self-conscious and persistent ingenuity as by the successors of Pietro, who now practised it for the ruin of the most powerful of his adversaries with consummate address.

Luca Pitti's name was not in the list of the banished, published by the *Balia*. No! look as his fellow-citizens, might, among the names of all those who had been striving for the overthrow of the Medici, there was no mention of Luca Pitti there. Why, he had been notoriously the originator and mainspring of the whole conspiracy! Ay! but none of the others had been closeted with Pietro de Medici for half an hour's private talk; half an hour, by San Lorenzo's clock! for there had been jealous eyes marking the minutes as they passed, and they have been recorded! Pietro de' Medici fully intended that they should be so watched and recorded. And the sending of Lorenzo, too, to the house of Messer Luca, in the midst of his renewed schemes for a rising plotted with the other malcontents! Was that done for nothing? Pietro, the son of Cosmo and the father of Lorenzo, had already learned his new trade, and perfectly well knew what he was about. And Niccolo Soderini, too, understood the trick, and knew what he was talking about when he said to Pitti, at

that last interview, which convinced him that Messer Luca meant to play false to his confederates; that he, Soderini, should be happier in his exile than Pitti would be in Florence. A.D. 1467.

"In his mansion"—the words are again those of Macchiavelli—"in those halls which used to be thronged by vast crowds of his fellow-citizens, an immense solitude was seen to spread itself. Those who had been his friends, and the connections of his family, not only avoided his companionship, but feared even to salute him. *For*—" (mark this characteristic word, and the force it has in taking away from the contemporaries of Pitti all the credit which might be given to them by the erroneous supposition, that honest indignation and upright manly feeling were the prompters of their avoidance of the disgraced man; *disgraced* in the Italian, not the English transmuted sense of the word) "—*for* from some of them their offices were taken away, from others their goods, and all were equally threatened. The superb edifices that he had begun were abandoned by the builders.* The benefits which had been conferred on him were turned into injuries, the honours which had been shown him into insult. So that many who had for the sake of favour given him things of great value, demanded them back again, affirming that they had been only lent; and others who had been wont to laud him to the skies, now cried out against him for an ingrate and a ruffian." †

Would it be possible to present in a few words a more repelling picture of the tone of feeling prevailing in a social community?

And thus ended in total discomfiture the second attempt to crush the Medici—as it deserved to end. For, with the

* Visitors to Florence will have remarked the strangely unfinished condition in which the Pitti palace has remained even to this day.

† Compare Ammirato, lib. xxiii. Gonf. 1052.

A.D. 1467. exception of the small and evidently powerless party of the moderates who adhered to Soderini, it is evident that the conspirators had not the remotest intention of replacing the rapidly increasing influence and authority of the Medici by any freer or more constitutional form of government.

CHAPTER II.

Dangers arising from the practice of banishing citizens—Endeavour of the Acciaiuoli to injure the Medicean banking business—The exiles stir up Venice against Florence—The Venetian Senate inclined to listen to them—Palla Strozzi—A Venetian army crosses the Po—Florence prepares for war—This war entailed on Florence by the Medici—Milan and Naples allies of Florence—Frederigo d' Urbino general for the Florentines—Inaction of the armies—Impatience of the city—Frederigo attributes his inaction to the presence in the camp of the young Duke of Milan—He is induced, therefore, to return to Milan—As soon as he is gone Frederick fights the battle of Imola—Different statements concerning that battle by different historians—Small results from it—The Venetians retire—Delusions of the exiles—Truce between Venice and Florence—Negotiations for peace—Difficulties in the way—Florentine reasons for wishing for peace—Pietro Barbo, a Venetian, elected Pope, as Paul II.—His plan for a peace—Rejected by the Florentines—Their reply to the Pope's proposals—The Duke of Milan also objects to the proposals of Paul II.—Peace signed 27th April, 1468—Thanksgiving in Florence—Fresh proscriptions by the Medicean party—Fresh attempts on the part of the exiles—Execution in Florence of fourteen conspirators—Affair of Gismundo Malatesta—Success of the Florentine against the Papal troops near Rimini—Death of Pietro de' Medici—His character.

If it were granted that the conspirators who were banished on this occasion merited such a punishment for their revolutionary attempt, it would be difficult to deny that the clemency of Pietro, which refused to listen to any proposal of punishment involving bloodshed, was ill-timed, and that it would have been wiser and better to have put these men to death. For the experience acquired by Florence of the dangers arising from the practice of banishing the leading members of a politically vanquished

A.D. 1467. party had been, during the whole course of the existence of the Commonwealth, uniform and unfailing. It may be said that all the dangers that had ever menaced Florence from without, had been, if not wholly caused, greatly increased and intensified by the consequence of this practice. It was so on the present occasion. No sooner were these men hunted out from their homes, and rendered desperate outcasts, spread over the surface of Italy as if for the express purpose of establishing depôts and agencies of disaffection and intrigue in every city of the peninsula, than they began to labour to bring about the possibility of their return, by raising up foreign enemies against their country. The means for achieving this were supplied by the existence, from generation to generation, of colonies of discontented Florentine exiles in every land, by the multiplicity of free-lance troopers and out-of-work soldiers of fortune seeking employment in every part of the peninsula, and by the never-sleeping jealousies of the variety of republics and principalities into which it was divided.

The earliest result of the enmity thus sown broadcast over Italy was, however, an attack of a more personal and private nature; though in fact the Medicean wealth and their political ascendancy were so closely connected, that what attacked the one endangered the other also. Messer Acciaiuoli, instead of obeying the decree which assigned Naples as his place of exile, joined his brother, the fugitive archbishop, at Rome; and there they strove hard to injure the credit of the Roman branch of the great Medicean banking business. They succeeded, too, in their attempt to such an extent as to give Pietro considerable uneasiness and trouble. But, by the assistance of friends, he was enabled to remedy the mischief, and defy his enemies in that quarter.

Dietisalvi Neroni and Soderini, on the other hand, betook themselves to Venice, and there laboured to move the

Venetian Senate to declare war against Florence. It would seem to our nineteenth century notions wholly monstrous, to suppose that a large and powerful community could be moved to go to war with a neigbouring state, simply because a couple of homeless exiles requested it to do so. But the chronic condition of political jealousy existing between Florence and Venice must be taken into account. And this state of feeling was specially exasperated at the period in question by the close alliance subsisting between the new Ducal dynasty of Milan and the Florentines, and by the soreness and anger still rankling in the heart of Venice from the disappointment of the hopes she had founded on the extinction of the house of Visconti. It must be remembered, too, that of course such exiles always abounded in representations of the strength of their party at home, of their influence with that party, of its ripeness for revolt against the existing order of things, and of the certainty that their connivance and assistance within the walls would easily enable any attack from without to overturn the present government, and establish one in its place, which, while restoring the exiles and their friends to home and to ascendancy, would be a firm friend and ally to the power which had so helped to restore them. It must be also borne in mind that the alliance between Milan and Florence, which was so hateful to the Venetians, was essentially an alliance with Medicean Florence, and certain to be broken and changed into hostility by a revolution which should put an end to the Medicean ascendancy. A.D. 1467.

These were the arguments the Florentine exiles had to use, and the feelings on which they had to work, in bringing their case before the Venetian Senate, And though the grave and potent signors before whom the exiles had to plead, might have listened somewhat coldly to an academically turned discourse, setting forth the obligation im-

A.D. 1467. posed on Venice by the glories of her past history to succour the unfortunate, and specially those who were martyrs in the cause of liberty; relating how the tyrants of Florence had reached such a pitch of impiety as to have made a religious service an opportunity for seizing on the persons of the citizens who were hostile to them; and urging them to war on that wicked city "as freemen should on tyrants, and virtuous men on reprobates;"—they did not listen coldly when the exiles wound up their pleading by exhorting them to remember, that it was against the will of the majority of the Florentine citizens that the family of Medici had snatched from Venice the empire of Lombardy, as Cosmo had done, when by his favour and his subventions he had enabled Francesco Sforza to withstand the Venetian Senate.

These last words, we are told, produced a powerful effect on the entire Senate. And when, in addition to all these arguments, the exiles announced to the assembled fathers that Giovanni Francesco Strozzi, the son of Palla Strozzi, a Florentine citizen, who had been exiled in 1434, and was now living at Ferrara, would support an expedition against Florence with all his credit and all his immense wealth, the Senators could resist no longer! For the riches of this Strozzi, who for the last thirty years and more had been making money during his exile at Ferrara, after the fashion of which the Florentines of that day seem to have had the secret, were well known in Venice. And the notion of making war on Florence with Florentine money was too sweet a prospect for a Venetian to resist.

News reached Florence accordingly that a Venetian army, under Bartolommeo Colleone, had crossed the Po, on the 10th of May, 1467, and was marching towards the Tuscan frontier by way of Romagna. Since Jacopo Piccinino, the surviving son of the great captain, who had served the Visconti so long and so unfortunately, had been

put to death in prison by the King of Naples, Bartolommeo was considered to have the greatest military reputation of any man in Italy; and a whole host of small despot princes marched with their respective followings in his army,—Ercole da Este of Ferrara, Alessandro Sforza of Pesaro, Cecco and Pino Ordelaffi, Lords of Forli, the Lords of Faenza, of Mirandola, and Carpi, and many other princelings, whose united forces brought up the army under Colleone to eight thousand cavalry and six thousand infantry. A.D. 1467.

The Florentines lost no time in bestirring themselves to meet so formidable an enemy. A "Ten of War" were created, as usual, and a forced loan imposed on the citizens to the amount of a hundred thousand florins. And thus Florence went to war for the preservation of her Medici. A great part of their power and popularity in the city was due to their liberality in assisting the citizens to pay their contributions to the State. But it does not seem to have occurred to the Florentines that, save for the Medici, many of these forced loans, and costly wars, and subsidies, would never have been needed. The present war, for instance, would never have taken place, had the Florentines possessed sufficient love for their free constitution to rally round Niccolo Soderini at the moment of his Gonfaloniereship, in such sort as to have secured the continuance of the constitutional election of the Signory and other magistrates. But they preferred being fed from the Medicean flesh-pots.

Florence, notwithstanding this congregation of the smaller princes under the standard of Venice, was not without allies in the coming war. The young Duke Galeazzo Sforza was on her side; as was also the King of Naples, of whom the Florentines had asked assistance, and who, now that the departure from Italy of the Angevine pretender to the throne of Naples had left him free from

A.D. 1467. war at home, was well pleased to do them a good turn in their time of need, hoping thus finally to detach them from any future pretenders of the house of Anjou.* The latter potentate sent his eldest son, Alfonso, to the allied army; and Galeazzo of Milan came in person,—to the annoyance of Count Frederick of Urbino, who was the Florentine commander-in-chief. For the young duke, we are told, "had much reputation, but little knowledge," and was accordingly found very much in the way. Giovanni Bentivoglio, of Bologna, also joined the Florentines with a number of men sufficient to bring up the total of their army to an equality with that of the Venetians.

Frederigo da Urbino marched into Romagna with these troops, and kept the army in check in the country to the south of Bologna, the two armies watching each other for some time, without any attack on either side. This lasted so long that the Florentines, who were paying all these generals and men, and who understood as little of the science of war as the theatrical lessee did of music, who was furious because he saw the bows of his hired fiddlers cease from their work for awhile, vociferating, when it was explained to him by those musicians that they had three bars "rest," that he payed them to play and not to rest, —the Florentines, who sat at home waiting to hear that the great lords and valorous soldiers whom they had hired to cut throats were honestly earning their money, lost patience, and complained to their general that they did not pay him to watch the enemy, but to fight them.

Mr. Secretary Macchiavelli, evidently taking the civic point of view, and perhaps not being led very far from the truth by doing so,—though the more courtly Ammirato throws a stone at him in passing, for his prejudiced view of the subject—declares that the two armies remained in

* Ammirato, lib. xxiii. Gonf. 1054.

their respective tents, in consequence of the "wonderful cowardice," with which they were commanded.* Count Frederick of Urbino, however, replied to the complaints of his employers, that it was all the fault of Duke Galeazzo, whose ignorance, joined to his high rank and authority in the army, made it impossible to do anything with any prospect of success. So the Florentines sent messengers to the young duke to tell him that the fact of his having joined their camp in person was equal in value to a victory, so much dismay would it cause their enemies; but that for the sake of his own States they implored him to take care of his own precious health and safety;—that it was perhaps hardly prudent for him to absent himself for a longer time from Milan;—and that if anything should happen to him either from danger at the camp or from disaffection at Milan, all would be lost; whereas as long as he was safe, they had good hope of bringing the present troubles to a prosperous conclusion. A.D. 1467.

Duke Galeazzo thought the advice good, and returned to Milan, passing by Florence to visit his Medicean friends by the way; and Frederick of Urbino, feeling himself bound, as Macchiavelli says, to show that the cause to which he had attributed his inactivity was the true one, did, as soon as the Duke was gone, bring the enemy to an engagement near Imola. The Florentine commander, moreover, as Ammirato assures us, being piqued probably by the reproaches of his citizen employers, caused the cry of "*carne*" to be raised in his ranks, a signal that slaughter, and not the making of prisoners, was to be the order of the day.

"They fought," writes Ammirato, "with incredible valour on both sides till dark night, with a loss on both sides together of three hundred men-at-arms, and four

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. v. ii. p. 186; Ammirato, lib. xxiii. Conf. 1057.

A.D. 1467. hundred horses;" . . . "if we are to believe," he adds conscientiously, after having made his flourish rhetorically, "the writer of the life of Bartolommeo Colleone:" "A Ferrarese historian," he says, "declares the number killed on this occasion to have been a thousand;" and other accounts, seen by Ammirato, put it at eight hundred. Sabellico, the Venetian authorized historiographer, says, that "those who were present declare that never in the memory of man was a greater battle fought in Italy, nor one in which the loss of life was greater."* But here is Macchiavelli's report of the matter. "They came to a regular pitched battle, which lasted half a day, without either side having given way. Nevertheless nobody was killed; only some horses were wounded, and a few prisoners taken on either side." Of all the writers, who have left records of this battle, Macchiavelli has by very far the greatest reputation as a historian; and indeed may be said to be the only one whose account of the matter has been accepted and read by posterity. But it is very evident that Ammirato believed that Macchiavelli was misled by his strong prejudice against the mercenary armies of that period.

Let the truth of the matter, however, have been as it might, it is certain that the results of the battle were small or none at all. The Venetians sent orders to Colleone to withdraw his army into Lombardy; which certainly looks as if the writers who claim a victory for Frederick of Urbino had the truth of the facts on their side. It became clear to them, at all events, that the Florentine exiles had not the power to bring about that co-operation between their friends within the city and the enemy without, of which they had boasted.

It was the old story, and is now a still older one. Exiles

* Degli Istorici delle cose Veneziane, tom. i. p. 733; Mar. Aut. Coccio Sabellico, dec. iii. lib. 8.

always imagine that their influence in the community which has exiled them is greater than it is. They always stand still, while the world keeps running on. The hand on their dial always continues to point to the never-forgotten hour in which they looked their last look on home and their native city. But busy days have succeeded each other there. The friends they left behind them have become tired of adhering to a losing cause, and have formed fresh connections and fresh interests. This Wandering-Jew-like survival of the life of their time is one of the bitterest penalties of banishment. A.D. 1467.

No movement of any sort within the city appeared to second the objects of the Venetian army; and the Senate began to perceive that they had been led by their resentments and cupidity into an unpromising and losing enterprise.

On the 8th of August, therefore, a truce was agreed upon, and Borso da Este, Marchese of Ferrara, was entrusted by the Venetians with the arrangement of the terms of peace. There were, however, difficulties in the way, which caused so much delay, and at one moment seemed to render a return to hostilities so probable, that the Florentine Government thought it necessary in the last months of 1467 to raise one million two hundred thousand florins, payable in instalments spread over three years. In fact some of the conditions, on which the Marchese Borso, acting on behalf of the Venetians, wished to make peace, were felt to be altogether inadmissible by the Florentines. They would by no means consent to sign a peace with Bartolommeo Colleone, as if he, in his own person, were the enemy of Florence. They insisted reasonably enough that Venice, in her own proud person, should sign the protocols. They would not consent either that the Pope should be passed over in silence, as was proposed, in the treaty to be made. But above all, they were deter-

A.D. 1468. mined not to grant the demand that the exiles should be restored.

There were reasons, nevertheless, that led the Florentines to wish for peace, if it could be had on terms in any way admissible. The young Duke of Milan had become exceedingly angry, when he heard that Count Frederick of Urbino had fought a battle directly his back was turned, and withdrew his forces from the Florentine camp in dudgeon.* The exiles continued also to give trouble. Three brothers of Dietisalvi Neroni were caught stirring up revolt in the Mugello, and were brought prisoners into Florence. It was discovered also that the wife of Messer Dietisalvi himself, who had remained in Florence, "surpassing the nature of ordinary women,"† was making herself the centre of dangerous intrigues in the city, and she had to be banished on the 22nd of November in that year.

Nevertheless the hopes of a permanent peace became less than ever in Florence, when it was known that the Pope (Paul II., Pietro Barbo, a Venetian who had succeeded Pius II. in 1464), had taken in hand the negotiation of the affair. He was at enmity with King Alfonso, because he had refused to pay the tribute, which the Papal see always claimed from Naples; and he was a Venetian,—a sufficient reason for Florence to doubt his impartiality as a peace-maker. On the 2nd of February, 1468, however, Pope Paul, scorning the slow and troublesome method of negotiation, published a peace by his sole authority; the main condition of which was that all the States of Italy were to league together, and were to pay Bartolommeo Colleone, as Commander-in-chief of their allied forces, a hundred thousand crowns a-year, for the purpose of making war against the Turks in Albania. A mighty

* Ammirato, lib. xxiii. Gonf. 1057. † *Ib.* Gonf. 1059.

pretty scheme, very ingeniously imagined, for saddling Italy with the cost of the Venetian Commander-in-chief! The Pope had been so good as to work out, too, all the details of the arrangement. He would himself pay 19 per cent. of the sum. Naples, Venice, and Milan were each to pay a similar quota of it. Florence was to pay 15 per cent.; Vienna, 4; Ferrara, 3; Mantua, 1; and Lucca, 1; making up just one hundred, as neatly as possible. A.D. 1468.

There was a considerable drawing down of the sharp-cut Florentine noses in the *loggie* and other talking places of the city, when this news reached the banks of the Arno. The proposal was decidedly "minus aptus acutis naribus horum hominum!" The Florentines always professed the greatest reverence for the Holy Father, as long as he was content to keep that character; . . . . . but they did not think they should like contributing to pay the Venetian General-in-chief. His Holiness, they said, seemed to be making an attempt to come over them in the same way that King Alfonso the First had, when he proposed that the different States should contribute to make up a salary for Piccinino. But he would have done better to remember what his own predecessor, Calixtus, had said upon that occasion—that it would be a scandal for the States of Italy to become the tributaries of a thief in reward for his having set all Italy by the ears. A crusade in Albania! They had been taken in by that trick once, and did not mean to be so again. But the Holy Father had concluded his edict of peace by an intimation that any city or prince that refused obedience to it should be *ipso facto* excommunicated. And excommunication was still a thing to be avoided if possible. So Florence replied to the Pope's proposal, "Certainly! by all means! Her money should be forthcoming as soon as ever Messer Bartolommeo Colleone should have put his foot on Turkish ground!"

But the Duke of Milan more openly declared that he

A.D. 1468. had no notion of paying the Venetian general in order that he might be ready to make war against himself, as soon as it should suit Venice to do so! King Alfonso of Naples was not a bit better contented with the post assigned to him. And when these facts became known, the Florentines sent Tommaso Soderini and Antonio Ridolfi to Milan to concert with the Duke an open resistance to the Pope's commands, and an appeal to a council in case he should go to the extremity of launching an excommunication against them.

But the Pope, though exceedingly angry, more especially at the whispers which had reached his ears about appealing to a council—that most detestable of all possible words to a Papal ear—drew in his horns, when he found how general was the opposition to his scheme, and finally consented to the signing of a peace on grounds to which all the parties could agree, which was published in Rome on the 25th, and in Florence * on the 27th of April, 1468.

The peace was celebrated with more than usual rejoicings in Florence, because it was felt that it had been concluded under circumstances not only favourable but especially "reputable" to the Republic. And though the reputation, which the Commonwealth was deemed to have gained from the successful termination of these affairs, arose from the fact of her having successfully bearded a Pope, and braved his excommunication, that did not prevent the celebration of the peace from taking a more than ordinary religious character, as appeared not only from the thanksgiving processions, which were got up in a style of more than usual splendour, but from the bringing into the city of the celebrated picture of the black Virgin from the village of Impruneta, a thing which was never done except on occasions of great moment and solemnity.

* Ammirato, lib. xxiii. Gonf. 1061.

But the crop from the dragon's teeth which Florence had sown was by no means all gathered in yet. Fresh aftermath kept springing up from that prolific seed, which no mowing, however literally performed, would keep down. A.D 1468.

"When the peace had been made," writes Macchiavelli, "those citizens who had remained victors in the contest could not feel that they had conquered, unless they inflicted injury of all kinds, not only on their enemies, but on all whom they suspected of being such."* The first step was to declare those exiles who had quitted the place of residence assigned to them rebels and outlaws. New plots were discovered, or invented, and, whichever they may have been, served to clear the city more entirely of all who could be suspected of disaffection to the Medicean rule. A Capponi, a Strozzi, a Pitti, an Alessandri, a Soderini, the son of that Messer Tommaso, whose close adherence to the Medici had separated him from his brother Niccolò, were banished in April, on accusation of having held treasonable correspondence with the exiles. In the following month an Orlandini, who had plotted to betray the town of Pescia into the hands of the exiles, was beheaded. "But neither the defeat near Imola, nor banishments, nor imprisonments, nor executions, nor the unsuccessful issue of their tentatives, could deter the exiles from making continually new attempts."†

In the autumn of that year (1468) came letters to the Signory from Francesco Pucci, the captain of the frontier fortress of Marradi, telling how a band of fifteen ruffians had come across the mountains out of Romagna, and had attempted to possess themselves of the fort of Castiglionchio, and how all of them, save one, who was killed in fight, had been taken, and were in his hands. They were ordered

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit., v. ii. p. 188.

† Ammirato, lib. xxiii. Gonf. 1063.

A.D. 1468. to be brought to Florence; and there, being examined, confessed that they had been sent on their unsuccessful expedition by Pino Ordelaffi, the Lord of Forli, and the Manfredi, who were Lords of Faenza; and that those princes had been persuaded to undertake the enterprise by the Florentine exiles.

The fourteen prisoners were all executed in Florence, to the no small terror of all those who were conscious of anti-Medicean sympathies. Of course the Government could do no less than sentence these men to death. No Government whatever could have awarded a less punishment to foreigners who had come across the frontier with arms in their hands on such an errand. But the Florentines felt that this severity was directed against the exiles, and was a result of the determination of the party in power thoroughly to crush and extinguish its opponents. And the feeling in the city is faithfully represented by Macchiavelli's statement, that those in power "ruled in such sort, that it seemed as if God and fortune had given up the city as a prey into their hands."

Abroad, the Florentines had the compensation, if they could feel it to be one, of seeing the power of Florence creditably and successfully exerted, in a manner that flattered the vanity of the citizens very agreeably. Despite the abounding respect the Commonwealth always professed, and indeed showed, to the person of the Holy Father, Florence was always specially proud of bringing a Pope to reason. Gismondo Malatesta, Lord of Rimini, one of the worst specimens of the very bad race of feudal tyrants who ruled the cities of the Adriatic coast of Italy during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, had died, after murdering three childless wives, leaving only one illegitimate son, Roberto Malatesta. This Roberto, who was as remarkable for good and amiable qualities as his father had been the reverse, was willingly accepted by the people

of Rimini as their ruler, and as the successor of his father, A.D 1468. despite the blot on his birth. He was protected, too, by the Count Frederick of Urbino, whose daughter he had married, and had been accepted as a "*raccomandato*," (or *protégé* owing service, and claiming protection), by Florence. King Ferdinand of Naples was also his friend and protector.

But, unfortunately, all this gave the most violent displeasure to the Pope, who claimed that the States belonging to Gismondo Malatesta should devolve to the Holy See on his death without legitimate heirs. He made a violent speech in Consistory, proposed to set all Italy in a flame by bringing back once again a pretender of the House of Anjou to the throne of Naples, and determined to seize Rimini by force of arms. He was assisted by Alessandro Sforza, the brother of Francesco Sforza, the late Duke of Milan, and uncle, therefore, of the present Duke, who was lord of the neighbouring city of Pesaro, and who hoped to hold Rimini himself under the Holy See on easy terms; and by the Venetians, who could not refuse their aid to a Venetian Pope. And the command-in-chief of the enterprise was confided to the Archbishop of Spalatro.

But the Count of Urbino marched at once to his son-in-law's assistance. King Ferdinand sent his son, the Duke of Calabria, with five thousand cavalry, two thousand infantry, and four hundred bowmen. And the Florentines sent aid under "their captain, Robert Sanseverino." The statement suggests the inquiry, what business the Florentines had with "a captain" and troops ready to be sent off in this manner at a minute's notice? They were not at war anywhere, or in danger of being so. There was no war going on in Italy. This quiet little intimation, that they sent off troops, without any mention whatever of special provision having been made, or a general hired, as used to be always the case when the Republic had to

A.D. 1469. engage in war, looks very much as if Florence had already adopted the expensive and monarchical grandeur of keeping a standing army. These troops reached Rimini on the 28th of August, 1469; and three days afterwards a battle was fought, which lasted an hour, and put four hundred men, taking both sides together, *hors de combat.* The Archbishop-led forces of the Holy See were routed, and the Pope prudently gave up an enterprise on which he had most imprudently entered.

So the Florentine captain and the Florentine troops marched home again, having brought His Holiness to reason by one hour's fighting; and there was great rejoicing and thanksgiving in Florence, as there well might be, at an event so remarkable and desirable.

But poor gouty Pietro, in his magnificent palace at the bottom of the Via Larga, was then well nigh past rejoicing even over a conquered Pope. He had for some time past, according to Macchiavelli, deplored the manner in which his partizans were rough-riding the Commonwealth, counselling and imploring them to use more moderation. It was all he could do. For he had, during this last year, become so paralysed by the increasing power of his malady, that the tongue was, as the historians assure us, the only member of his body over which he retained any control. With that he did the best he could, as Macchiavelli assures us. But on the 3rd of December, 1469, that member also ceased its work; and Pietro the gouty was carried to neighbouring San Lorenzo, very quietly, "lest a magnificent funeral should draw the jealousy of the citizens on his successors, who wanted not the appearance but the reality of power." *

"A good sort of man was Pietro," continues that historian, "and of a benignant turn of mind; and in all the

* Ammirato, lib. xxiii. Conf. 1071.

changes that occured in his time to the Republic, it was in a great measure due to him that his partizans did not stain their hands with the blood of their fellow-citizens, which they were most exceedingly inclined to do. He was not devoid of experience, nor of acuteness of intelligence. But infirmities, when they are long-continued, weaken the mind as well as the body. And besides, the reputation of Pietro de' Medici suffered much from his position between a father and a son, whose brilliant glory was sufficient to pale every smaller light." A.D. 1469.

Lorenzo, his elder son, was twenty-one years of age at the time of his father's death; and Giuliano, the younger, sixteen.

CHAPTER III.

Tommaso Soderini—Faithful to the Medici cause—State of things in Florence at the death of Pietro de' Medici—Popularity of the Medici—The brothers Lorenzo and Giuliano—Meeting in the church of St. Antonio —Project of Paul II. to give Bologna to the Venetians—The meeting determine that the Medicean authority shall be continued in the person of Lorenzo—Account of this meeting from Lorenzo's own papers—The Pope abandons his project respecting Bologna—Attempt of Bernardo Nardi at Prato—Utter failure of the attempt—Execution of Nardi—Halcyon days in Italy—Lorenzo created "Sindaco"—Visit of Galeazzo Sforza to Florence—Rivalry in magnificence—Journey of the Milanese Court across the Apennines—Gorgeous magnificence—How paid for—Warning to Florence—Reception of the Duke in Florence—Milanese laxity in the observance of Lent, contrasted with Florentine habits—Festivities in Florence—Sumptuary laws in Florence—Death of Paul II.—His character and appearance—Elevation of Francesco della Rovere, as Sixtus IV.—His character—Good and bad Popes came in groups—Sixtus IV. in the eyes of his contemporaries—Florentine embassy to the new Pope—Lorenzo de' Medici well received by Sixtus IV.—Commencement of ill-feeling between him and the Medici—Lorenzo disappointed by not getting a Cardinal's hat for his brother—Fresh modification of the Florentine constitution—Excites no opposition in the city —Notice of the new changes in the chronicle of Lionardo Morelli.

TOMMASO SODERINI, who at the time of the recent conspiracy separated himself from his brother, to adhere to the fortunes of the Medici, as has been seen, was charged by Pietro, on his death-bed, to watch over and protect the interests of his sons, as Dietisalvi Neroni had been charged by the dying Cosmo to be the friend and support of his heir Pietro. And though Pietro had, at the time of his father's death, reached the mature age of forty-eight, whereas the wards entrusted to the care of Tommaso Soderini were lads of twenty-one and sixteen, and though Cosmo

had left the Medicean authority in a much firmer and safer position than that in which Pietro had now bequeathed it to his sons, Soderini was faithful to the trust, which Neroni had so treacherously betrayed. A.D. 1469.

It is true, that fidelity to the trust placed in him by his friend involved conduct which every Florentine, faithful to the free constitution of his country, must have considered treason to the Commonweath. For what was meant by protecting the interests of the young Medicean heirs was nothing less than maintaining the political ascendancy of the family, consolidating the work of raising them into recognised masters of the Republic, as far as it had yet gone, and pushing it forward in the same direction. This was what Messer Dietisalvi Neroni, treacherously and from no worthy motive, or love of constitutional liberty, failed, as has been seen, to do; and what Messer Tommaso Soderini faithfully and successfully did.

Nor would it be just, in all probability, to accuse him of witting and conscious treason to his country in acting as he did. It was very difficult for the most ardent lover of liberty to see, at that time, any tolerably fair prospect of restoring the old constitutional forms of the Government to healthy action. The recent attempt, made hopeless from the beginning by the difference of the motives and aims of those engaged in it,—a fatal circumstance, which would inevitably be reproduced in any new attempt of the kind,—had issued in a manner that was not calculated to encourage any lover of his country to essay a second experiment. The present and visible evils of the existing state of things were not great or pressing. The masses of the people were not discontented with what may be already called the Medicean Government. The higher classes, with the exception of the remains of the old parties, and of the few adherents of that malcontent section of the Medicean party which had divided off from its chiefs, and had so disas-

A.D. 1469. trously failed in the attempt to supersede them, shared in the advantages of the Medicean supremacy. The middle classes were amused and flattered by continual elections to the numerous offices and honours of the Republic, all which they enjoyed in peace and safety, on the sole condition of governing the state as they were bid. And they were not bid to govern it in any worse or more unpopular way than it had ever been governed, but in a much better way than it had often been governed by freely elected magistrates.* The citizens were called on, indeed, to pay far higher contributions to the public treasury than they would willingly have done. But Florence was still an exceedingly wealthy community; and though the large sums which Cosmo had caused to be advanced to the first Duke of Milan, of the Sforza dynasty, had caused much discontent, yet it was known that the Medici had contributed to the object in view to a yet larger extent even from his own private purse; and it was after all doubtful whether the establishment of a friendly dynasty on the throne of Milan were not a political object well worth the money paid to ensure it, as well as in a simply financial point of view it was assuredly less costly than the continual wars with a hostile dynasty on that throne. Personally the Medici were as yet popular, and favourites with the people. The grandfather and father of Cosmo had both been so. They had always stood before the public eye as emphatically friends of the people. Cosmo himself, by his popular and unassuming manners, and his immense liberality, had increased the heritage of popular affection. And though Pietro had, immediately after his father's death, been led by the perfidious advice of his false friend Dietisalvi Neroni, to endanger this traditional popularity by that step of calling in his father's debts, yet it was under-

* It will be observed that these remarks are not intended to be extended to the time of Lorenzo de' Medici.

stood that when his party had come out victorious from the struggle, with the mixed party of patriots and traitors, his voice had been consistently on the side of moderation and mercy, and that when confined to his bed and helpless he had still used the only power left to him in entreating those who ruled in his name to be moderate and merciful to their and his enemies. The young lads, his sons, at the same time, were as yet the favourites and the pride of Florence. Already they had both of them exhibited their prowess and their magnificence in jousts and spectacles provided gratuitously for the most spectacle-loving people in the world. Already Florence had been gratified by seeing them outshine in splendour and gallant bearing sovereign princes from other cities, and had learned to be proud of being so represented before the face of Italy in their persons. It is, I think, undeniable that the Medici were at that time personally very popular in Florence. A.D. 1469

It is not, in short, easy to see why Soderini, or any other Florentine citizen, however patriotically anxious for the welfare of the Commonwealth, should have felt himself bound to refuse such a trust as that which Pietro de' Medici had imposed on him, unless he were moved by such an enlightened appreciation of the value of constitutional forms as it was impossible he should have possessed,—an appreciation which the added experience of four centuries has by this time availed to impress on some few of the foremost communities of the world, but which the majority of them do not even yet acknowledge. We, looking back over the course of this history from our high point of vantage ground, know that all the miseries, the worthlessness, the baseness, the effete and contemptible incapacity of the Tuscan people during the wretched centuries of the Medicean principality were the appointed and inevitable Nemesis, the due avenger of that deficiency of civil and moral worth, which made the preservation of constitutional

A.D. 1469. self-government impossible to those turbulent and self-seeking citizens. It was not to be expected that even the best among them should foresee those workings of the laws of social life, of which only a few of those who have seen the entire drama played out to its final development are even yet able to recognise the sequence and significance.

Soderini may be well pardoned for thinking that, on the whole, he was doing the best that could be done for Florence as well as for the interests especially entrusted to his guardianship, in acting as he did.

No sooner, accordingly, had Pietro been laid to his rest in the church of San Lorenzo, then Messer Tommaso called together the leading men of the city to a meeting held at night in the church of St. Antonio. It was not necessary to say in so many words that the meeting was called to decide upon the expediency of continuing to the young Medici as an inheritance, an authority which was not *nameable;* which, according to the language and forms of the constitution, under which the city still professed and supposed itself to be living, did not exist. There was a pretext ready found for the convocation of a meeting, which indeed hardly deserves to be called a pretext, inasmuch as the matter referred to really required the very serious attention of the citizens of Florence.

There was a rumour that Pope Paul II., Pietro Barbo the Venetian, intended to give Bologna to the Venetians. It was in no sense his to give; but that, in the case of a Pope, was an altogether insufficient guarantee that the scheme would not be carried into execution. Whatever right anybody had to be Lord of Bologna, besides the citizens themselves, belonged at this time to the Bentivoglio family. It is true that Rome claimed and exercised, more or less substantially as she had or had not the power, a

vague and ill-defined right of suzerainty over the city. A.D. 1469.
But in any case this right, let it have been what it might, was the property of the Holy See, and not that of Pietro Barbo, to be given away to whomsoever he pleased. There could be very little doubt, however, that if the Pope chose to declare that he gave it, and it suited Venice to take the gift, the transfer would take place without any reference to anything that Bologna might have to say in the matter; and moreover, that the ill-defined right of supremacy claimed by the Pope would be forthwith converted by the Venetians into perfectly well-defined and unmistakeable sovereignty and possession. And this it was altogether out of the question that Florence should permit.

There was therefore a good and real reason enough for calling a meeting of the leading politicians of the city, to consider what was to be done in this matter.

Tommaso Soderini was at that time "without any doubt," says Ammirato,* the most influential man in Florence. So much was this felt to be the case that there was not a man at that meeting who would have ventured, says the historian, to speak his opinion until Messer Tommaso had addressed them. Of course there was not a man there who was not perfectly well aware that the main question before them was, what was to be henceforward the form of the government of the city, and what place were the Medici to occupy in it. It was of course equally well known that Soderini had been charged with the protection of the interests of "the family" by the late .... we must not say "prince" just yet. And of course Soderini could not say so. But what was he to say? It is curious how violently men's ears will resent and rebel against a sound long after their minds have ceased to feel any great abhorrence of the thing.

* Ammirato, lib. xxiii. Gonf. 1091. His reputation, Macchiavelli assures us, was by no means confined to Tuscany. Macch. ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 192.

A.D. 1469. So Messer Tommaso rose, and in a "grave and most prudent speech," as Ammirato says, pointed out to the meeting, that with a view to the maintenance of prosperity and tranquillity in the city, they could do nothing better than "follow the course of government which had been begun, and confirm to Lorenzo de' Medici *the reputation of the State** in place of his father." The words are remarkable. Not a syllable is said, nor does any word appear to have found any place in the rest of his speech, as to any qualities of Lorenzo, which might make it desirable to invest him with any authority. Soderini proceeds to justify his proposal by precisely the same arguments which would be used in favour of the general principle of hereditary monarchy. The account of the matter given by Lorenzo himself in a paper of "*ricordi*" left by him, which has been printed at length by Roscoe,† is worth citing. "On the second day after his (Pietro de' Medici's) death, although I, Lorenzo, was very young, that is to say twenty-one years old, the principal men of the city and of the State came to *us*, to our house,‡ to condole with us on our loss, and to encourage *me* to take on *me* the care of the city and the government, as my grandfather and father had done. And I consented to do so unwillingly, seeing that with reference to my age the burthen and the danger were great; being induced solely by the desire of preserving our friends and our property; for it is difficult to live at Florence without having the power of the government in one's hands (literally "without the State");§ and that we have hitherto successfully managed these affairs with credit and reputation;—bearing in mind at the same time that all this has been due not to my

* "Riputazione dello Stato."

† Life of Lorenzo. Appendix, No. x.

‡ A statement, which proves that the account of Macchiavelli, noticed in a subsequent note, is incorrect.

§ "Senza lo Stato."

own prudence, but to the grace of God, and the good conduct of my ancestors." Not a word is uttered either here, or by Soderini, of Giuliano de' Medici, the younger of the two sons of Pietro. Evidently the principal-manship,—for no other more usual word must be used on pain of setting all Florence by the ears!—the leading citizenship of the Commonwealth has come to be considered a matter of inheritance. We have reached that phase of the matter. A.D. 1470.

Others spoke after Messer Tommaso,* but all in the same sense. And when the Pope heard, we are told, of the unanimity which prevailed in Florence, and of the absence of all disturbance in the city, he gave up his project respecting Bologna, well knowing that the Florentines, unless they were wholly occupied with internal discord, would fight to the last rather than permit Venice to possess Bologna.

Nor do we proceed far without meeting with traces of some of the usual advantages of that order and tranquillity which are connected with and procured by the habitudes of despotic rule. Within the first half year of Lorenzo's reign,—the word will not raise such a storm now as it would have raised if it had been heard in the Piazza della Signoria at the time in question;—on the 6th of April, 1470, sudden news came from the little city of Prato, twelve miles off in the Valdarno, between Florence and Pistoia, which showed that those fatal "*fuorusciti*" were still moving;—not quite crushed yet, but heaving and threatening, if care be not taken, to disturb all the order

* Macchiavelli represents Lorenzo and Giuliano as having been present at the meeting, and says that the former spoke, and spoke so well as to conciliate the good opinion of all present. And the conclusion was, says the historian, that Lorenzo *and Giuliano* should be honourd as princes—"principi"—of the republic. But the word has evidently no other meaning in Macchiavelli's mouth in this place than "chief men." Macch. ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 193.

A.D. 1470. and tranquillity expected from the hereditary transmission of our chief-man-ship. Two brothers of the family Nardi, sons of a citizen who had served his time as Gonfaloniere, had been declared rebels at the time of the disturbances last year. One of these brothers, Bernardo, having, as it should seem, no better foundation for his enterprise than the mere chance circumstance of an acquaintanceship with one of the officers of the Podestà of Prato, gets together a following of some thirty or so of desperadoes, and riding into the city, gets possession of the Palazzo Pubblico before anybody could look round, makes the Podestà prisoner, and then rides through the town, calling the inhabitants to arms, and promising them independence, privileges, and above all no taxes; and threatening to hang and quarter the Podestà and anyone else who holds for the Florentines. The Prato people stared and let him ride on; but none of them seemed inclined to take part in his enterprise. And one Messer Giorgio Ginori, a worthy citizen of ours, seeing that it needed but a firm hand to crush this little attempt at sedition in the bud, before it had time to become dangerous, rapidly got together a few Florentines who were residing in Prato for their affairs, and attacking Nardi and his followers in the palace, took all of them prisoners after five hours' fighting. In the meantime Bernardo Corbinelli had been sent off in all haste with a strong body of troops. For there was no knowing how such a matter as this might end, let the beginning of it have been as absurdly unimportant as it might. Some of the exiles were still powerful in the cities on the other side of the Apennines, and were always plotting and intriguing with the lords of them. A very few hours were sufficient to bring a raid of cavalry across the hills from Romagna; or perhaps even the enemy was ready waiting among the mountains, prepared to pounce down into the valley as soon as the townsmen of any small

place that had walls and would serve as a *point d'appui* had been gained over. And then it was impossible to say where the matter might end. With our "*fuorusciti*" spread all over Italy, every man of them desperate with ruin, and enemies to the death of Florence and all that lived in it, it was necessary to be very careful and ever on the alert. So no time was lost in sending off Messer Corbinelli and his men. But when they reached Prato they found Nardi and his band already prisoners, and had only to convey them to Florence;—having first, however, made the duty of doing so a little easier by condemning twelve of their number to summary execution before leaving Prato; and thus taking care that the citizens of that once proud and turbulent little independent republic should have their fair share of the advantage to be gained from the wholesome warning conveyed by the fate of these disturbers of Medicean tranquillity. A.D. 1470.

It was ascertained in Florence that Dietisalvi Neroni had been cognizant of this hair-brained plot. But he was, as his enemies in Florence well knew, far too prudent a veteran in such matters to have put himself within reach of danger from the explosion of so clumsily thrown a shell.

Bernardo Nardi was executed two days afterwards in Florence, and six of his companions within the week, to the notable increase of the "reputation" of the government.*

And now, the regularization of the Medicean power having been thus determined on, and quiet by these means obtained in Florence, there, as elsewhere in Italy, began those halcyon days celebrated by Guicciardini in the exordium of his history. Never since the fall of the Roman empire, one thousand years previously, had Italy enjoyed, says the historian, a period so flourishing and

* Ammirato, lib. xxiii. Gonf. 1073.

A.D. 1471. happy as that which extended from the period of which we are speaking up to the year 1494. "Reposing in perfect peace and tranquillity," continues the great historian, "cultivated in the more sterile and mountainous regions, as well as in the plains and fertile districts, subject to none save her native rulers, she not only abounded in inhabitants, trade, and wealth, but was especially adorned by the magnificence of a great number of princes, by the splendour of many noble and beautiful cities, by the majesty of the supreme seat of religion, and by the excellence of her great men in every art, pursuit, and science."*

For the more satisfactory inauguration of those piping times, an heir was presented early in 1471 to Lorenzo by his noble wife Clarica degli Orsini,—heir-apparent to the chief citizenship,—quite a matter of public rejoicing to Florence; which, to tell the truth, likes rejoicing,—public rejoicing, when the individual rejoicer is not called upon to put his hand in his pocket to pay the piper,—so dearly, that she is never very critical as to the occasion which may be made the excuse for junketing, and shutting up shops and other working places.

At the end of the year 1470, a few months previous to this happy event, Lorenzo had been created "Sindaco" of Florence by his admiring fellow-citizens. *Sindaco!* Well, the title will do for the present; especially, as it is a new and extraordinary one with no meaning in particular attached to it in Florence, which never found out that it needed a Sindaco before. And the new Syndic immediately tries his hand at making a knight, "in the name of the people!" Rather a strange function for a "*popolo*" to put its hand to; but one, which curiously enough, "the Commune" of Florence had always claimed to exercise; and had exercised, sometimes with chivalric ceremonies of

* Guicciardini, 'Hist. Ital.' lib. i. ch. i.

a kind quite peculiar to itself, as has been seen in the course of this history. A.D. 1471.

But there were still greater junketings in store for Florence;—junketings, such as the sober and thrifty Republicans on the banks of the Arno had never yet seen. These were the sort of things that a magnificent Prince loved to provide for his faithful subjects . . . . that is to say, ... a magnificent Syndic loved to provide for his confiding fellow-citizens, if only they would hold no communication with those pestilent and abominable *fuorusciti*, and be content to let things go on as they were going in Florence!

The splendid Duke of Milan was coming on a visit to his old acquaintance Lorenzo de' Medici. There was an opportunity for showing off what Florence could do in the way of rivalling princely Milan in magnificence. We are but plain republican merchants on the banks of the Arno, and have no chivalric Duke at the head of our city, but we rather think our young Lorenzo can walk a-head of any prince in Italy in the matter of splendid hospitality and profusion, though we do call him only a "Syndic."

This Galeazzo, Duke of Milan, born in 1444, was now in his twenty-seventh year, and Lorenzo was four years younger. They had met twelve years before, on the occasion of Galeazzo's former visit to Florence, and Lorenzo probably had admiring reminiscences of the stripling who was just old enough to have balls and tournaments given in his honour, while he was yet little more than a child. Now they were both young men in the prime of life, and both recently bridegrooms; for Galeazzo had just married his second wife, Bona of Savoy, after the death of his first childless wife Dorotea Gonzaga.

Duke Galeazzo Sforza, like Lorenzo de' Medici, was greatly inclined to profuse and gorgeous magnificence The age was one of rapidly-increasing luxury and riches

A.D. 1471. And the parvenu sovereign of Milan was especially bent on eclipsing his peers, and proving his right to his position among them, by an unrivalled display of all that tailors, upholsterers, mercers, and jewellers can do towards creating the majesty that should hedge a king.* He came to Florence in satisfaction of a vow;—at least, so he said, as Macchiavelli remarks † with a sneer; but assuredly the style of his progress was little in accordance with a journey undertaken with any such motive.

Twelve litters made part of the cortége which accompanied him into Tuscany; from which it may be concluded that not only his Duchess, but other ladies of his family accompanied him in his expedition. These litters are called by a contemporary writer ‡ carts,—"*carretti;*" but he adds that they were *carried* on mules over the mountains; as must indeed necessarily have been the case, for no one of the roads which now cross the Apennines in this district, neither that between Bologna and Florence, nor that between the former city and Pistoia, nor that between Modena and Lucca was at that time in existence. The carts, as the Milanese chronicler tells us, were covered with awnings of cloth of gold, embroidered with the ducal arms, and the "mattrasses and feather-beds," which were laid in the bottom of them, were some of cloth of gold, some of silver, and some of crimson satin.

All the great feudatories, who held of the Duke, and all the members of his council, each followed by several splendidly-dressed servants, attended him. All the members of the ducal household were clothed in velvet. Forty footmen were decorated with golden collars, and other forty with embroidery. The Duke's grooms were dressed

* Life of Catherine Sforza by the present writer.

† Ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 199.

‡ Corio, Historia di Milano, ad. ann. 1471.

in silk ornamented with silver. There were fifty led horses, with housings of cloth of gold, and gilt stirrups; an hundred men-at-arms, "each dressed as if he were a Captain;" five hundred foot soldiers, all picked men; an hundred mules covered with cloth of gold; and fifty magnificently caparisoned pages. Two thousand other horses, and two hundred more mules, all covered with rich damask, carried the baggage of the multitudinous host. Five hundred couples of hounds, with huntsmen and falcons and falconers in proportion, together with trumpeters, players, mimes, and musicians, made part of the magnificent cortége.* A.D. 1471.

Let the reader picture to himself this gilded and velvet-covered army slowly wending in long slender file, glistening dazzlingly in the southern sun, but grievously tormented under their ponderously magnificent trappings as they laboured over the steep and sinuous Apennine paths by which alone they could reach mountain-girt Florence. Let him imagine, too, the camp of the brilliant but way-worn host, pitched for the night amid the shelter of a chestnut forest, in the midst of those wild hills, where even now, and much less then, there is neither town nor village capable of housing a tithe of such a multitude.

This is the gorgeous picture which the diarist and chroniclers have preserved for us. But let not the reader forget, while amusing his fancy with such gorgeous and picturesque imaginings, that every yard of this cloth of gold and richly-tinted velvet, represented the value of some horny palm's hard labour, the sweat of some weary brow wrung from the wronged labourer by the most cruel and lawless severities of extortion.†

* Life of Cath. Sforza by the present writer.—Verri, Storia di Milano, cap. xviii.—Corio, ad ann. 1471.—Rosmini, Istoria di Milano, vol. iii. p. 19. This learned, accurate, and trustworthy history of Milan was printed in that city in four volumes 4to., 1820.

† Ibid. vol. i. p. 98.

A.D. 1471. This, however, at all events, could not be said as yet of the Medicean splendour, with which all this magnificence was destined to vie. Dukes, by the divine right of the sword in feudally governed Milan, earned no riches, and produced none. But the enormous wealth, which enabled Lorenzo to do more than compete with all the Duke of Milan's lavish display, had been earned by more or less honestly conducted industry. The sight, however, of all the Ducal braveries might, one would have thought, have served to suggest a warning to some of the more forecasting of the frugal Florentine Republicans, of some of the probable consequences of allowing a "Syndic" to develop himself into a full-blown prince.

The Duke arrived in Florence on the 13th of March; and was magnificently received by the magnificent Lorenzo, who entertained him and his more immediate circle in his own house; while the enormous body of his retainers and followers were lodged and fed at the cost of the city. The Florentine historian, Ammirato,* after having enumerated all the particulars of the pomp, goes on in the true spirit of the old Italian city-patriotism to maintain that Galeazzo, "for all that, young and proud, and the minion of fortune as he was, found himself obliged to admit that all his splendour was outdone by the magnificence of Lorenzo, inasmuch as the precious treasures of the Medici were far more admirable from the artistic excellence of the workmanship, than from the mere value of the materials. He could not but confess," continues the partizan of the Italian Athens, "that art had a higher value than mere costliness, as being attainable only by more arduous labour, and with greater difficulty; while he declared, that in all Italy he had not seen so great a number of paintings by the first masters, of gems, beautiful vases, statues, ancient and modern, bronzes, medals,

* Lib. xxiii. Gonf. 1079.

and rare books, as he now saw collected in the palace of the Medici;—treasures which he should esteem cheaply purchased by any quantity of mere silver and gold." A.D. 1471.

Florence did all she could for the amusement of her princely guests. But unfortunately it was the time of Lent; and to be "like the time," it was necessary, that the dissipations should be of an ecclesiastical character. Macchiavelli indeed tells us that on occasion of this lenten-tide visit, "a thing was seen in Florence, which had never been seen in our city before; to wit, that, whereas it was in the season of Lent, when the Church commands that no flesh shall be eaten, all this court of his (Galeazzo's) ate without any respect for God or the Church." It is curious to observe that habits and modes of life were much more strict and primitive among the trading community of Florence than among the military and feudal society of Ducal Milan. Nevertheless, I am disposed to think, that this more rigid adherence to the precepts of the Church in Florence was due not so much to a greater disposition on the part of the Florentines to superstitious practices, or even to reverential church feeling;—for I do not find that the Florentines were at any period of their history thus characterized;—but rather to the fact, that the commands of the Church in this respect fell in remarkably well with the natural turn of the citizens to thrift and frugality;—a disposition which has always characterized the Florentines, among the other people of Italy, and does so very remarkably to the present day,—contrasting them notably in this respect, especially with the more freely and generously living inhabitants of the rich plains and cities of upper Italy. I am disposed to think, that if the Church had enjoined a season of costly festivity, instead of one which implied a diminution of the ordinary household expenses, Milan would have been found the more obedient daughter, and Florence the contumacious one.

A.D. 1471. It was in any case necessary however that the public amusements to be offered by the city to the strangers should so far conform to the requirements of the time as to be of an ecclesiastical character. So the gallant company were treated to a representation of the Annunciation in the Church of St. Felice, to the Ascension in the Church of the Carmine, and to the Descent of the Holy Ghost on the Apostles at the church of the Santo Spirito. The souls of the Lombards, says Ammirato, were filled with admiration of the wonderful artifices and ingenuity displayed on this occasion. And all passed off with the greatest *éclat*, and to the perfect satisfaction of all present, save that the church of Santo Spirito was burned to the ground by the somewhat too literal and vivid representation of the forked tongues of fire.

This little accident was the only circumstance that tended, says the historian, to mingle some flavour of bitterness with the general rejoicing. And even that mishap gave rise to the re-construction of the sacred building in a style, and on a scale of much greater magnificence than before, as it may be seen to this day. But the graver citizens of the Republic complained that the brilliant Duke, when he started two days after this disaster on his return to his own States, full of compliments and admiration at his hospitable reception, left behind him among the young Florentine nobles a taste for profusion and display, which was a far greater evil than the enormous expense to which the city had been put in entertaining him, including the cost of rebuilding their burned church.* Macchiavelli indeed says that many worthy men considered this destruction of the church of Santo Spirito to be a special manifestation of the wrath of God against this outburst of luxurious habits; and adds

* Life of Catherine Sforza, by the present writer.

that the evil grew to such a height that it was found necessary to bridle the tendency to extravagance and profusion by new sumptuary laws as to clothes, and funerals and banquets. A.D. 1471.

Shortly after the departure of the Duke, news reached Florence of the death, on the 26th of July, of Pope Paul II., that superb old man, who, if he had none other of the qualities befitting the head of the Church, yet at least looked every inch a Pope; of whom Ammirato says that having been originally intended for a mercantile career, and not having succeeded very well in his subsequent attempts at literary culture, "he determined to make his pontificate reputable by ornamental pomp, in which his majestic presence, and pre-eminently tall and noble person helped him not a little, giving him, as it did, the appearance of a new Aaron, venerable and reverend beyond that of any other Pontiff." *

And the tidings of the death of this imposing lay-figure Pope were very shortly followed by the yet more interesting news of the election of his successor on the 9th of August, 1471.

This successor, a very remarkable man in the long and curiously varied line of Roman pontiffs, was Francesco della Rovere, who had risen from the cell of a Franciscan friar by his merit as a scholar and theologian, and especially by his eloquence as a preacher, to be first General of his order; then Cardinal; and who had now reached as Sixtus IV. the highest aim of an ecclesiastical ambition. He was the son of a poor fisherman of the coast near Savona: for the fiction of the heralds, who found for him a place in the genealogy of the noble family of the same name, was an afterthought of the time, when such a relationship had become acceptable to the parties concerned.

* Ammirato, lib. xxiii. Gonf. 1081.

A.D. 1471. This bare-footed mendicant friar,—the vowed disciple of that St. Francis, whom no degree of poverty would satisfy short of meeting his death naked and destitute on the bare earth,—this monk sworn to practise a humility abject in the excess of its utter self-abnegation, was the first of a series of Popes, who one after the other sacrificed every interest of the Church, waded mitre-deep in crime and bloodshed, and plunged Italy into war and misery for the sake of founding a princely family of their name.

It is curious to observe, that generally throughout the Pontifical history, scandalously infamous Popes, and tolerably decent Popes are found in bunches, or series of six or eight in succession; a striking proof of the fact, that when they have been of the better sort, the amelioration has been due to some force of circumstances operative from without. Never were they worse, with perhaps one or two exceptions, than during the eighty years which preceded the first quickly crushed efforts of the Reformation in Italy;—from the date of the accession of Sixtus IV., that is to say, down to 1550. Competing Protestantism then began to act on the Roman Church, exactly as competing Methodism acted on the Anglican Church three centuries later; and a series of Popes of a different sort was the result.

But the conduct of the great family-founding Popes, of whom this mendicant monk, Sixtus IV., may be considered to have been the first, which strikes us, looking at it through the moral atmosphere of the nineteenth century, as so monstrous, wore a very different aspect even to the gravest censors among their contemporaries. The Italian historians of the time tell us of the "royal-mindedness" and of the "noble spirit" of this ambitious Franciscan, Pope Sixtus, in a tone of evident admiration. And the gross worldliness, the low ambition, and the unscrupulous baseness, of which he may fairly be accused, did not seem even to Du

Plessis Mornay,* and the French Protestant writers of that stamp, to be sufficient ground for denouncing him and the system which produced him. Otherwise they would not have disgraced themselves and their cause, by asserting that he was guilty of hideous and nameless atrocities, for which, as the less zealous but more candid Bayle † has sufficiently shown, there is no foundation either in fact or probability.‡ A.D. 1471.

Florence, according to immemorial usage, immediately sent an embassy to congratulate the new Pope on his accession. The citizens chosen for this honourable mission were Agnolo della Stufa, Bongianni Gianfigliazzi, Domenico Martelli, Piero Minerbetti, Donato Acciaiuoli, and Lorenzo de' Medici; and the duty of making the oration to His Holiness, in the name of the Commonwealth—a task which was always specially assigned to some one among the members of similar embassies, was on this occasion entrusted to Donato Acciaiuoli, a man of much reputation among the scholars of that day. But of course the more important confidential intercourse between the Pope and his Florentine visitors took place between His Holiness and Lorenzo. The Pope, who perfectly well knew the nature of the young Medici's position in Florence, and was quite aware how useful this all but sovereign ruler of such a state might be to him in the schemes and hopes he was

* Mystère d'Iniquité, p. 555, *et seq.*

† Article, Sixte IV.

‡ The foregoing account of the journey of Galeazzo Sforza to Florence, and the remarks on the character of the new Pope, Sixtus IV., have been taken, in great part, from a life of Catherine Sforza, published in 1859 by the present writer. Having to go over the same ground, and not feeling that I could say what had to be said any better than I had said it before, I preferred to take the required passages as they stood, rather than to re-write them for the mere purpose of varying them. And I shall adopt the same course with reference to any other passages in the little studies I have published on different portions of Italian history, which may seem to me to tell the story I have now to tell as well as I am able to tell it.

A.D. 1471. already nourishing, received him with marked distinction, and loaded him with favours. In the first place he intimated his intention of appointing the Roman branch of the Medicean banking firm to the very lucrative position of treasurers to the Holy See. Lorenzo also received a lease, on very favourable terms, of the highly profitable alum mines of La Tolfa, in the vicinity of Viterbo; * and brought back with him to Florence other marks of the Holy Father's liberality, as he has himself recorded in the memorandum above cited. The following paragraph is the last of the fragmentary document.

"In September, 1471," he writes, "I was elected Ambassador to Rome on occasion of the coronation of Pope Sixtus IV.;—where I received much honour, and brought back thence the two ancient heads in marble of the statues of Augustus and Agrippa, which the Pope gave me; and besides that, I brought our basin of carved calcedony, and many other camei and medals, which were bought at the same time."

But the friendly feeling between the Pope and the Medici did not last long; and there is some reason for believing, that even already in the midst of all the courtesies that passed between them, feelings had been aroused that prepared the way for the bitter animosity that ere long raged between them. Notwithstanding all that he did get from the Pope, Lorenzo was disappointed in the object he is believed to have had principally at heart in his journey to Rome. He wanted a Cardinal's hat for his brother Giuliano. It would have been an important means of spreading and widening the influence of the family, might have led to who knows what high destinies, and would, in the meantime, have taken off his brother to Rome, and left him, Lorenzo, more entirely free to do as

* Platina, Vit. Pont. p. 468; Bruto, Lib. v. p. 69.

he pleased in Florence. The danger of a brother "near the throne," was none the less certainly felt to be such, that the throne was an unrecognised and unavowed one. A.D. 1472.

But Pope Sixtus refused this request, not thinking it well, says Ammirato, to increase the power and influence of that aspiring family too much.*

Meantime measures were quietly pursued at Florence for getting all the power of the State more completely and securely into the hands of the dominant party, and for preventing any danger from a possible change in the present sentiments of the people. It was determined to abolish the two ancient popular councils, that called "*del Comune*," and that denominated "*del Popolo*," to appoint five "*accoppiatori*,"—(as the officers were called who were from time to time exceptionally created for the purpose of arbitrarily nominating the magistrates, instead of entrusting their selection to the constitutional forms of election,) —and to give them a commission to choose forty citizens, by whom a body of two hundred were to be named; who should have the power of doing anything and everything which it was competent to the whole body of the nation to do, except the suppression or alteration of the "catasto."†

There really seems something childish in the elaborated complexity of a scheme, of which the scope was so very evidently to place despotic power in the hands of those who were at the time in possession of the executive authority. It makes one feel a certain measure of contempt for a people who could allow the operation of throwing dust into its eyes to be so very simple.

But these advances of the establishment of an unchecked and irresponsible sovereignty, in the place of an elaborate and complex democratic constitution, were made, as has been said, *quietly*. The shamelessly audacious propositions

* Ammirato, lib. xxiii. Gonf. 1081. † *Ibid.*, lib. xxiii. Gonf. 1081.

A.D. 1472. of the men who held the government in their hands, were quietly accepted by a city which, as Jacopo Pitti writing about a century later says, had become "more interested in its traffic than in public affairs," and in which the usurpers "were supported by the great number of those who took their ease under the Medicean standard."* The phrase is a remarkable one, and indicates the main cause of the quietness with which the Florentines allowed things to be done, the bare proposal of which would have sufficed once upon a time to call every citizen to arms under the "gonfalon" of his guild. They had become too rich; peace was too important to them; they were too busy in making money; they had come to understand too clearly that order, stability, and political repose are needful for the process of money-making; they had seen and felt the value and advantages of money so keenly, that they had come to consider the acquisition of it as the one thing needful; the Medicean rule did not in anywise pinch the majority of them as yet; they "took their ease" under it, and were by no means disposed to face the certain troubles and confusion which would have attended any attempt to check the progress of it towards despotism.

The contemporary diarist, Lionardo Morelli, after having related in detail the placing of the gilt ball and cross on the top of the "Duomo," or minster of Florence, on the 27th of March, 1472, and given the exact measurement of it, with the quantity of grain it would hold, goes on to state with the most perfunctory brevity: "In the time of the Signory for September and October, they appointed five men, who were to have the entire authority over all the people of Florence, to oversee and wind up the affairs of the Guelph party, and of the old magistracy of Commerce, and to create a stock, that is to say, a fund of

* Istoria Fiorentina; di Jacopo Pitti, vol. i.; del. Archiv. Flor. Ital. Flor. 1342, p. 21.

money, for the diminution of the public debt." And then he mentions, in the same easy and matter-of-course tone, a few banishments, and imprisonments, and fines.* A.D. 1472.

And thus the downhill progress went on very smoothly for the present, and very rapidly, while the citizens, or at least such of them as were content to let political and governmental matters take their course, and hold their tongues, grew richer and richer, and the city was from day to day embellished with masterpieces of art in all kinds.

* Ricordi di Jacopo Morelli, Deliz. degli Erud. Tosc. vol. xix. p. 188.

CHAPTER IV.

Alum mines of Volterra—Disputes with Florence arising out of them—Lorenzo de' Medici interested in the mines—Progress of the dispute—Volterra openly rebels against Florence—Steps taken by Florence to put down the rebellion—Debates in Florence as to the treatment of Volterra—Lorenzo is for severity—Disgraceful treatment of Volterra by the Florentine troops—approved of by Florence—Erection of a fortress, serving as a state prison in Volterra—Lorenzo de' Medici sends assistance to Città di Castello, in its revolt against the Pope—Growing irritation between Lorenzo de' Medici and Sixtus IV.—Florence, Milan, and Venice renew their league together—The Pope and the King of Naples league together—Pietro Riario, the Pope's favourite nephew—his character, and conduct—His brother, the Conte Girolamo Riario—The Pope's intention with regard to him—The visit of the Cardinal Pietro Riario to Milan—Sympathy between him and the Duke of Milan—Galeazzo Sforza—his character—Secret deliberations and designs between the Cardinal and the Duke—The Cardinal visits Venice—returns to Rome—and dies—believed to have been poisoned—The Cardinal passed by Florence on his return to Rome—Various causes of enmity between the Pope and the Medici—Frederigo di Urbino, general for the Pope, takes Città di Castello—Tournament on the *piazza* of Santa Croce—Condition of Florence at this period—Conduct of Lorenzo de' Medici towards Florence—Murder of the Duke Galeazzo Sforza.

But although the Florentines were content to look on at the transformation of their Republic into a despotism, without thinking it worth their while to disturb themselves by seeking to arrest the process, they could not avoid being in the following year drawn by a pounds-shillings-and-pence question into a little war, which issued in a great and scandalous calamity.

There had been found certain alum mines in the volcanic soil of the territory of Volterra. Alum was an important

article of commerce on account of the large use made of it in the Florentine manufactories, and a discovery of the article within the dominions of the Republic was a very important matter. It had till very recently been believed that no alum existed in Italy, till the discovery of the previously mentioned mine of La Tolfa, near Viterbo, in the pontificate of Pius II. Subsequently another deposit of this substance was discovered in the Tuscan Maremma; but at the time in question, the alum of the mine in the Papal States having been till then the only supply of the mineral in Italy, the discovery of it near Volterra, on the territory of the Commonwealth, was a very valuable one. A.D. 1472.

The exact story of the very serious dispute between Florence and Volterra, which arose out of this discovery, is not very clearly given by any of the historians; but it is evident enough, that the two cities were quarrelling over the large profits which it soon became manifest were to be drawn from the new mines. It would seem that the mine was discovered on land belonging, not to any individual, but to the Commune of Volterra; and that the municipal government of that city, unaware of the great importance of the privileges they were giving away, had carelessly and hastily leased the mine to the finders on very inadequate terms. These latter, either for the sake of finding capital for the working of the mine, or perhaps, as is suggested by some of the writers, suspecting that it might be desirable to have some friends powerful enough to protect their rights, associated in their speculation certain Florentine citizens. And there is reason to believe * that Lorenzo de' Medici was more or less directly inte-

* Guicciardini, in the remarkable dialogue which has been before quoted in these pages, makes Piero Capponi say that this war with Volterra "was caused by Lorenzo, who, for the gratification of private resentments of his own, drove Volterra into rebellion."—Opere Inedite di Guicciardini, vol. ii. p. 41.

A.D. 1472. rested in the affair. It is very evident that the discovery was an especially important one to him, as being the lessee of the only other alum mine then known in Italy; and to acquire an interest in the new mine was in fact the only means of preventing the valuable concession of the La Tolfa works from being greatly diminished in value by the discovery. The fact of Lorenzo being the possessor of a private and commercial interest in the mine would contribute powerfully to place his subsequent conduct in the affair in an odious light; and it will be readily understood, when the sequel shall have been told, that any connection between him and the enterprise in question would be kept as much in the background as possible.*

The strange phrase which Lionardo Morelli uses in speaking of the matter, hurriedly dismissing the whole subject as he does in half a dozen lines, although it occupied all the thoughts and tongues of the Florentines for the best part of a twelvemonth, and led to very important permanent results in settling the relationship in which Volterra was thenceforward to stand towards the reigning city, looks

* See a note by Marco Tabarrini on the Volterran chronicle, printed in the 3rd vol. of the Appendix to the Archivio Storico Italiano. The learned editor of the chronicle says there: "It is in fact certain that the first lessees of the mine, when they knew that the Commune of Volterra wanted to cancel their contract, interested Lorenzo de' Medici in the enterprise; who in counselling this unjust and terrible war, made a very ugly community between his own private interests and the government of the Commonwealth." There is also some curious evidence to be found in Signor Tabarrini's illustrations of the Volterran chronicle, which leads to the belief that the Chancellor of the Commune of Volterra was a friend of Lorenzo, and had granted the original leases with fraudulent connivance for the benefit of the lessees, and to the injury of the Commune. It is impossible to weigh all the fragments of evidence bearing on the subject without coming to a very strong suspicion that Lorenzo was from the first beneficially interested in the grant of the mines. See, besides the notes above referred to (Archiv. Stor. Ital. Appendix, vol. iii. p. 331), Muratori, Script. Rer. Ital., tom. xxiii.; Præfat. ad Commentarium Hivani. This "Ivano" was no other than the fraudulent Chancellor in question, who wrote a curiously ex-parte "history" of the Volterran war.

very much as if the matter was one which would not conveniently bear much examination or talking about. "On the 26th of April, 1472," he writes, "the people of Volterra rebelled against the Florentines, by reason of a certain discontent on account of the alum mines which were discovered in their territory. They would have had the profit for their municipality, whereas it became the property of private citizens of this city, whence bloodshed ensued in their town. It would be a long business to tell the whole story, and therefore it is better to be silent about it." * A.D. 1472.

It seems to be pretty clear that the municipal government of Volterra did grant a lease of the mines to the discoverer, and that when the importance of the concession became apparent they wished to resume their grant. The lessee, of course, together with and supported by his Florentine partners, resisted this, and the matter was referred for arbitration to Florence. A commission of citizens in that city were appointed to report upon the merits of the case; and they decided that the pretensions of the municipality of Volterra, which wished to deprive its citizens of the proceeds of their labour and industry, were unjust;—that the mines had legally passed into private hands;—but that it would be right that an annual head-rent should be paid, as an acknowledgment that the ownership of the fee-simple of the property was vested in the municipality. This is the account of the award given by Macchiavelli. And on this Ammirato remarks, that he sees reason to believe that Macchiavelli was correct in stating that the quarrel was merely between the city of Volterra and its own citizens. But it seems to me that no such inference can be drawn from what Macchiavelli says. The legal right which the Florentine commission had to examine, and on the validity of which they had to report,

* Ricordi di Lion. Morelli, Deliz. degli Erud. Tosc. vol. xix. p. 189.

A.D. 1472. was founded certainly on the grant of the municipality made to certain of its own citizens. And in attempting to resume this grant they were guilty of a desire to deprive their own citizens of the results of their industry, as Macchiavelli has said. But the terms of this report by no means show that the quarrel was not also with those Florentine citizens whose rights were equally invaded, though they were derived not from the municipality at first hand, but from arrangement between themselves and the original lessees.

The result, however, of the communication of this award to Volterra was, that the municipality of that city wholly refused to abide by it. Public feeling was so deeply stirred in the little hill city on the subject, that riots ensued, in which several persons, who had endeavoured to persuade their fellow-citizens to submit to the terms of the decision, were killed. And on the 27th of April the city took up arms, turned out, and was with difficulty restrained from murdering the Commissary, who resided there on behalf of the Florentine government as supreme authority on all not purely local matters, and went into open rebellion.

The tidings of this absurd impertinence,—for as such rather than in any more serious light the Florentines were disposed to consider it,—caused nevertheless considerable indignation in Florence. This was the fourth time Volterra had kicked up its heels in the same way; and thrice Florence had been obliged, with more or less of trouble and cost, to reduce the turbulent descendants of the independent and sovereign old Lucumones to obedience. And time had been when the revolt of such a city was a source of serious danger to the Florentine Commonwealth, in the days when the hand of nearly every community in Italy was against its neighbour, and when powerful foes would have been only too glad to avail themselves of such

an opportunity of striking a blow at the great Guelph Commonwealth in a weak place. But now in the piping times of peace which Italy was enjoying there was no danger of this kind, or indeed of any kind, to be apprehended. It was quite out of the question to suppose that Volterra, which had been able, it was said, to get together some thousand ill-disciplined and insubordinate rapscallions by way of an army, could oppose any serious resistance to the power of Florence. It was more like a pack of rebellious schoolboys "barring out" their master than anything that could be called war. Nevertheless the Florentines had to appear in arms at the bottom of that steep hill for the fourth time, and the veteran Frederick of Urbino was sent with an ample force to bring the contumacious mountaineers to reason. A.D. 1472.

It was no long or difficult task to do this, though it cost Florence a hundred thousand florins, which sum was allocated for the prosecution of "the war." But when the poor but proud and stiffnecked little mountain city was reduced to cry for mercy and sue to be admitted to return to its allegiance to the rich and powerful upstart community whose plebeian trading propensities made its modern-fashioned location down there in the valley on the banks of the Arno so much more thriving an one than their own haughty site on their old Etruscan hill, there was a serious debate in Florence whether this cry for mercy should be heard, and how and on what terms peace should be granted to the rebels. Tommaso Soderini, with the wise moderation which, as we have seen, especially characterized him, was for accepting their submission, pardoning what was past, and allowing things to return to their former footing, without seeking to inflict any vindictive measure of punishment on the men of Volterra. "*Meglio un magro accordo che una grassa vittoria,*" he said, in the words of a wise old Italian adage. "A poor agreement is a better thing

A.D. 1472. than a fat victory." But this is the wisdom of grey hairs, and did not commend itself to young Lorenzo de' Medici. Anxious to emancipate himself from his leading-strings, and to make his first essay in directing the policy of the State according to his own unassisted judgment, and being moreover stimulated, as Macchiavelli asserts, by certain of those around him who were envious of the authority of Soderini, he expressed a very decided opinion that it was necessary to make a terrible example of a people who had now for the fourth time rebelled against the supremacy of Florence.

It is remarkable that in a matter of this importance, and one in which the reason of the matter was so clearly on the side of the opinion which Soderini had supported, the pleasure of the Medicean stripling should have at once prevailed. Despite the grey hairs and the high reputation of the old statesman whose name had weight in every city of Italy, Florence suffered herself to be passively led by a lad barely of age, who, according to the laws and constitution she still professed to live by, ought to have had no more authority in the Commonwealth than any other individual of its citizens. As to the constitutional magistrates, with whom the decision of the matter ought to have been, we hear no mention of them with reference to the subject. Soderini gives his advice in one sense, as adviser to the Medicean youths, in accordance with their father's will. Lorenzo speaks his pleasure in a contrary sense; and all is said and done.

So orders were given to take Volterra by siege. This was not altogether an easy thing to do, notwithstanding the overwhelming force at the disposition of Florence in comparison with all that Volterra could muster in its defence. The little city is absolutely protected against the assault of any amount of troops by the precipitous flanks of the hill on which it is built, on all sides save one. Its

ancient walls, in part the imperishable work of the race which inhabited it some two thousand years ago, were no contemptible or easily overcome means of defence. And if the small force of defenders in the pay of the city had been faithful to their duty, the work of taking the city might have been a long one. But the wretched, worthless mercenaries whom Volterra had hastily collected and hired for the job cared little to defend the walls, and spent their time in every sort of debauchery at the cost of the miserable citizens. So that it really became a question whether it would not be better to put an end to such a state of things by admitting the Florentines into the town, and trusting to their mercy. Certain of the citizens who had friends in the Florentine camp had no doubt upon the subject. They opened communications with the besiegers when the siege had already lasted twenty-five days, and having bargained for the safety of the city from violence and pillage, persuaded their fellow-citizens to give up their resistance and admit the Florentine troops. A.D. 1472.

The result was one exceedingly and deplorably disgraceful to the Florentine name. No sooner had the troops entered the city, than, fraternizing with the worthless horde of mercenaries who ought to have defended it, they joined them in committing every species of abomination to which a sacked town could be exposed. No consideration of age, sex, or profession sufficed to save the inhabitants from every outrage and insult which a brutalized soldiery could inflict. Universal pillage—pillage of houses, churches, convents, monasteries—lasted for one whole day. And the conduct of these Florentines of the cultivated and polished fourteenth century was bitterly contrasted by the unhappy Volterrani with that which they had experienced from the same enemies two hundred years before, when their city had been taken, not as now by agreement, but by assault and in hot blood. But then

A.D. 1472. no injury or outrage of any kind had been offered to the townsmen by the citizen army which had fought against and conquered them. The explanation of the difference, however, lay in just this,—that on the former occasion it was a *citizen* army which had fought against citizens. Now the city had been taken by a band of brutalized, faithless, lawless mercenaries.

Nevertheless we read that "the news of this victory was received in Florence with the greatest delight; and inasmuch as the enterprise had been entirely due to Lorenzo de' Medici, his reputation was increased by it exceedingly."* The same writer adds, that when some one taunted Soderini with the advice he had given in the matter,—sneering, "what do you say to it, Messer Tommaso, now that we have so gloriously won Volterra?"—the old man replied that Volterra seemed to him to have been rather lost than won.

The anger and rage that had been felt in Florence against Volterra for having dared to rebel against the Florentine majesty may be measured by the rewards which were showered upon Count Frederick of Urbino on his return from this surely very inglorious campaign. He had fought and conquered for Florence in far more important as well as less discreditable battles before then, but never had he been rewarded and fêted as he was for having allowed a city of their own territory to be sacked in defiance of the pledged word of the Republic. He was made for this a citizen of Florence, and was presented with a silver helmet of wonderful workmanship, and with a banner of honour. Other costly presents, chiselled vases, and garments most exquisitely ornamented, were bestowed upon him by the gratitude of the citizens. And that the freedom of the city should not be mere empty honour, the estate of

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 203.

Rucciano, which had belonged to Luca Pitti, was bought and given to him. A.D. 1473.

Notwithstanding all this, we hear that there were men in Florence who thought that Lorenzo had gained anything but credit from this business. And if we are to believe that he had a personal and private interest in the matter, which first gave rise to the dispute, and had private grudges of his own to gratify, his conduct will appear to us in blacker colours.

It was determined in Florence to take precautions that should effectually secure the Commonwealth against the recurrence of any such trouble in Volterra. They removed the ancient palace of the bishop, which occupied the most commanding position in the city, and on the site of it erected a fortress, which, having been from time to time increased and improved by subsequent rulers, served, as long as any dangerous spirit of independence remained in the old Etruscan community, to control the city, and now is used as a secure prison for the most desperate of the offenders whom the absence of capital punishment in Tuscany leaves on the hands of the government.*

Another circumstance in the following year, 1473, places in a yet stronger light the all but absolutism of the authority Lorenzo had already succeeded in establishing in Florence. Città di Castello, a small but turbulent and independent-minded little city in the upper valley of the Tiber, was in rebellion against the authority of the high-handed and violent new Pope, Sixtus IV., the Franciscan mendicant, who could not brook the idea of any resistance to his authority. The great and immensely wealthy family

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. lib. vii.—Ammirato, lib. xxiii. Gonf. 1085-6.—Lion. Morelli, loc. cit.—Io. Mic. Bruti Historia Florentina, Litera Octo. 1 vol. 4to. Ven. 1764, lib. v. p. 248 *et seq.*

A.D. 1473. of the Vitelli were the native lords of Città di Castello, and the inhabitants had some difficulty in making up their minds which government was the worst,—the rougher, ruder, and less systematized tyranny of their own fellow-citizen, or the leaden oppression of the Church. Now Niccolo Vitelli was a great friend of Lorenzo de' Medici. The time had been, when the Florentines would have been disposed to ask, with reference to any leading man among them, what business on earth any such had to be intimate with the sovereign tyrants of cities subjected to the misfortune and the degradation of living under the "*governo di un solo?*" He would have been given to understand, probably in a manner more significant than agreeable, that such friendships were not wholesome for a free Florentine citizen. But those times were already far gone, and Florence was beginning to be proud of having a princely representative of her own deemed good enough to consort with sovereigns.

So Lorenzo de' Medici sent aid to Vitelli in his struggle against Pope Sixtus. Macchiavelli's words are: "He (Vitelli) was a great friend of Lorenzo de' Medici; therefore assistance from the latter did not fail him."* Bruto says, that money was supplied to him by the city (of Florence), and that assistance and subsidies were sent to him secretly.† It is evident that what was done, was done

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 203.

† Bruto, ed. cit. lib. v. p. 259. Of this Venetian writer's History of Florence, the Cav Adami, in his preface to the Chronicle of Paolino Pieri (p. 18), says: "If I were permitted to propose to students one among all our historians worthy to serve as a model of style and method, I should name Michael Bruto, who wrote during the last years of the Republic, and who treated more especially of the matters relating to the Medici, than of the general story of our country. I will not say a word of his remarkably pure Latin style, nor insist on his perfect and entire truthfulness. I confine myself to the philosophic and reasoning portion of his work, in which respect I venture to characterize him as superior to every other." The universal judgment has always confirmed entirely what Adami here says of

by Lorenzo or on his account. He disposed of the power of the State for an object of his own, in which Florence was not only in nowise interested, but which was especially calculated to bring her into difficulty and trouble. For the aid given to Vitelli was not, as might easily be imagined, so secretly managed as not to come to the knowledge of the Pope, who was of course irritated against the Commonwealth in no small degree. A.D. 1473.

There had already been causes of mutual ill-will between the Medici and Sixtus, which had very materially altered the relationship in which they stood towards each other immediately after the Pope's accession, when Lorenzo had been a member of the Florentine embassy which went to congratulate him on his elevation. And it was not long before the enmity generated in this manner produced its fruit in very disastrous consequences.

For the present, however, Pope Sixtus dissembled his displeasure; although various symptoms were not wanting which showed that the general peace in Italy was in danger of being broken. Florence, Venice, and the Duke of Milan renewed their league in the year 1473, leaving a place, as was the custom of such documents, for the Pope and the King* to join it. But instead of doing so, those two potentates made a separate league between themselves, leaving place for the other three of the great Italian powers to join them if *they* pleased. And the element of division and discord thus introduced into Italy was constantly being strengthened by a variety of acts on either side calculated to breed mutual irritation. And in all probability war would have again broken out all over Italy if the Pope

the truthfulness of this vehemently anti-Medicean writer. But with regard to his latinity, it is a curious specimen of what was admired and cultivated in that age of fantastic conceits and studied obscurity. Bruto wrote a style which is a caricatured attempt at an imitation of Tacitus.

* "The King," in the writings of the Italian historians of this period, always means the King of Naples.

A.D. 1473. had not been checked by a disaster which very seriously deranged his plans and his means of carrying them into execution.

Much of these had depended on his favourite "nephew," who was in all probability his son.* Peter Riario was, like his father,—or uncle, as the reader pleases,—a Franciscan monk; and was twenty-six years old when the latter was elected. Within a very few months he became Bishop of Treviso, Cardinal-Archbishop of Seville, Patriarch of Constantinople, Archbishop of Valentia, and Archbishop of Florence. From his humble cell, from his ascetic board, from his girdle of rope, and woollen frock renewed yearly, and baked occasionally to destroy the vermin bred by its holy filth, this poverty-vowed mendicant suddenly became possessed of revenues so enormous, that his income is said to have been larger than that of all the other members of the Sacred College put together. The stories which have been preserved † of his reckless and unprecedented expenditure at Rome would seem altogether incredible, were they not corroborated by the fact that he had in a very short time, besides dissipating the enormous wealth assigned to him, incurred debts to the amount of sixty thousand florins. He gave a banquet to the French ambassadors which cost twenty thousand crowns, a sum equal to more than ten times the same nominal amount at the present day. "Never," says the Cardinal of Pavia, "had pagan antiquity seen anything like it. The whole country was drained of everything that was rare and precious; and the object of all was to make a display such as posterity might never be able to surpass. The extent of the preparations, their variety, the number of the dishes, the price of the

* Corio, the contemporary annalist of Milan, writes: "*Hebbe due, chi egli chiamava nipoti.*" Istoria Mil. p. 974. Macchiavelli says, "*Secondo che ciascuno credeva erano suoi figliuoli.*" Lib. vii.

† Papiensis Card. Epis. 548. Diario di St. Infessura, p. 1144.

viands served up were all registered by inspectors, and the account was put *into verse*, of which copies were profusely circulated not only in Rome, but throughout Italy, and even beyond the Alps!"* A.D. 1473.

The other of the two youths whom the Pope called his nephews, was, we are told, "not literate," and a layman. It was impossible, therefore, to enrich and exalt him by so rapid a process as could be pursued in the case of his tonsured brother. A slower course, and one needing a far greater amount of forethought and wide-spread plotting, had to be adopted for the conversion of him, the illegitimate son of a peasant-born mendicant monk, into the founder of a princely family. Such, however, was the object for which Pope Sixtus lived, and for the furtherance of which he wielded the whole power and influence of the Papacy. The process by which this could be done was certainly a longer and more complex one than the simple plan which sufficed to accumulate the wealth of half-a-dozen Bishoprics on the head of the monk his brother; but the results of the slower growth would be, according to the general law, of greater durability. The layman was the means by which the "greatness" to be got out of the Papacy was to be rendered permanent in the family Della Rovere. But in the meantime the magnificent young Cardinal, who, if the contemporary accounts can be believed, was, in spite of the unbridled debauchery of his life,—or rather of that portion of his life which was subsequent to the elevation of his "uncle" to the Papacy,—a very able man, was a very necessary tool in the Pope's hand for the construction of the family greatness. He it was whom the old Pope employed in the delicate intrigues with the different courts and powers of Italy, which had this consummation for their object.

* Life of Catherine Sforza, by the present writer.

A.D. 1473. He had been visiting Milan and Venice with this object. The gorgeous accounts of the Cardinal Peter Riario's unprecedented splendour and reckless prodigality, especially touched a sympathetic chord of admiration in the bosom of the Duke Galeazzo. The splendid prince who lavished on upholstery, festivals, and courtezans the substance wrung from a groaning people, recognised a kindred spirit in the magnificent churchman who expended the revenues of a dozen sees on a banquet and a revel. The spirit of noble rivalry was awakened in the Ducal bosom. Here was a man in whose eyes it was worth while to shine, and whose admiration would confer real glory. The Cardinal, too, recognised in the Duke of Milan that "greatness" which was most calculated to excite his own sympathy and admiration. He, too, felt that here was a spirit of his own calibre;—one with whom he would willingly pull together in the arduous work of furthering their mutual fortunes, and vie in the ostentation of magnificence.

The Cardinal left Rome for Milan with a train more like that of the most magnificent of Popes, say the chroniclers, than such as might befit a Cardinal; and reached the latter city on the 12th of September, 1473. Great were the preparations made to receive him; and bitter were the groans of the magnificent Duke's helpless subjects under the new extortions necessitated by their master's gorgeous "hospitality." The glittering cavalcade of the lay prince met the no less glittering cavalcade of the ecclesiastical prince at the gates of the city; and as those were "ages of faith," both proceeded at once to the Cathedral to inaugurate the pleasure and business of the meeting by a solemn "Te Deum." So thoroughly did the sanctifying influences of religion, as has often been remarked, pervade every affair of life in those happy times! All Milan was witness to the festal doings on this notable meeting;—the

processioning, revelling, tailoring, gilding, and reckless profusion, which marked the noble rivalry between these two great men. A.D. 1473.

In all the ordinary pastimes and pleasures of the princes of that day, of whatever sort, the splendid Cardinal, though so recently a mendicant friar, was able and willing to run neck and neck with his secular host. But some of Galeazzo's favourite enjoyments were not ordinary. He was ever an avid eye-witness of the executions, tortures, and mutilations which his duty as a sovereign obliged him frequently to inflict on his subjects. We have indeed on record a sufficient number of instances of princes who had this taste, to justify our deeming it part of a despotic ruler's natural idiosyncrasy. But Galeazzo had also stranger, if less maleficent propensities. He revelled in the sight of death and human decay. Some strange touch of that insanity which so frequently, and with such salutary warning, develops itself in minds exposed to the poison that wells out from the possession of unchecked power, seems to have influenced, as in such cases it is apt to do, his moral rather than his intellectual nature. He would cause himself to be brought into the presence of the suffering, the dying, and the dead, for the mere pleasure of witnessing pain and dissolution. He would rifle graves to gaze on the process of corruption, and haunted charnel-houses, impelled by the instinct of the ghoul, rather than by any touch of that sentiment which leads the morbid fanatic to seek in such contemplation a moving sermon on the vanity of human wishes. This man, whose wishes, hopes, and ambitions were as unbridled in their violence as they were low and worldly in their aims and scope, would hurry from the death-chamber to the revel, and from the monitions of the charnel-house hasten to plot long-sighted intrigues in the Council Hall.

For the latter, the pleasure-loving Cardinal was as ready

A.D. 1473. as for gala-making and revelry. Long conferences were held between the host and his guest in the secresy of the Duke's private chambers. But princes are more than other men subject to the vigilant surveillance of those who form their pomp, or minister to their service. And their secrets, therefore, are seldom absolutely secret. Accordingly Corio, the page, chamberlain, and annalist,—a dangerous plurality for better sovereigns than Galeazzo Sforza—Corio informs us, though qualifying his assertion by a cautious "*si dice*," that these prolonged discussions had for their object the terms of a bargain between the Duke and the Cardinal, by virtue of which the former was to be exalted into King of Lombardy by the acquisition of sundry provinces from the smaller princes around him, and especially by the conquest of the terra firma possessions of Venice, while the latter was to be ensured the succession to his so-called "uncle" in the Papal throne. The statement of the chamberlain and page has been believed by most subsequent historians. Verri, without any qualification, writes that such was the case. Rosmini contents himself with saying, that it is believed to have been so.* The more ostensible object of the business to be transacted between these high contracting parties, was a marriage between Catherine, an illegitimate daughter of the Duke, and Girolamo Riario, the Cardinal's brother, by means of which the lordship of the city and territory of Imola, to be taken from the Manfredi by mingled force and fraud, was to become the possession of Girolamo.

But alas for the short span which should forbid such long-sighted hopes! To men who live such lives as his Eminence the Cardinal Riario had lived since his elevation to the purple, the span is apt to be especially short. And

* Life of Catherine Sforza. By the present writer.

as for the Duke, ... there is one Cola Montano the scholar, and three pupils of his, young Milanese nobles, engaged, while the Duke and the Cardinal are plotting, in reading certain passages of Roman history which are not altogether a desirable study for the subjects of despotic princes. A.D. 1473.

The proposed marriage was duly completed, with the results which had been anticipated from it, ... and with sundry others which had not been anticipated. But the other schemes were very soon dissipated into the thinnest of air by the strong arms of those students of Roman history in the case of the Duke, and by certain pains and penalties from which no most orthodox believer can be delivered by any exertion of pontifical authority in the case of the Cardinal. For there is reason to believe that these natural pains and penalties were in reality the agents that saved the world from the continued disgrace of a longer sojourn upon it of the magnificent Cardinal monk, notwithstanding the suspicions of that suspicious age.

The matter fell out in this wise. When the Cardinal was preparing to bring his visit to the Duke to a conclusion, he informed his host of his intention to pass a short time at Venice before returning to Rome. The Duke strongly urged him to abandon any such idea. The secret schemes which they had been engaged in concocting were mainly based on the intended spoliation of the Queen of the Adriatic. Uneasy suspicions, as the chroniclers mention, had already been aroused in various courts by the prolonged conferences of the Duke and his guest. The Signory of Venice had proverbially long ears, and unscrupulous arms at its command. It might well be, urged the Duke, that at the present conjuncture, Venice might not be so safe a place of sojourn for his Eminence as could be wished. It is probable also, that Sforza may

A.D. 1474. have been moved to make these representations by a jealous suspicion that Riario's business at Venice might possibly be to play a double game,—to throw him over in case contingencies should arise to make such a policy expedient; and to prepare his way with the Signory for any such eventualities. At all events, his representations and endeavours were in vain. The Cardinal was determined to go to Venice, and to Venice he went.

In all probability his leading motive was to exhibit his magnificence to the nobles of the most splendid and pleasure-loving capital in Italy. Nowhere did that taste for show and festive pomp, which was especially characteristic of the period in question, and which was so much the taste of the young Cardinal, prevail to so extravagant a degree as among the money-making nobles of the Queen of the Adriatic. The Cardinal-Archbishop of so many churches was ambitious of exhibiting his glory among those illustrious youths, and taking part in their gorgeous revels; and despite the prognostications of the Duke of Milan, he was received with all honour by the Venetians, hailed as a worthy compeer by the brilliant society of the Republic, fêted to his heart's content, and taken leave of, when towards the end of the year he started Rome-wards, with every demonstration of respect and friendship. But there were ancient Senators in Venice, very gravely sitting in one of those thick-walled smaller chambers of the Ducal palace, reading despatches in cipher from secret agents, taking secret counsel together, and making secret provision for the safety of the Republic, while the youth and beauty of the city and the gay and gallant guest who had so recently been plotting against the Lion of St. Mark, were making themselves so charming to each other . . . . And it did so happen, that from some cause or other the young Cardinal died a few days after his return to Rome, on the 5th of January, 1474,

to the great grief, as Corio says, of Pope Sixtus, and to the infinite delight of the whole College of Cardinals. A.D. 1474.

As to the real cause of his death history can say nothing, for nothing is known beyond the facts here set down. But it may be observed on the one hand, that fifteenth-century dissipation was particularly destructive to human life, and that the Cardinal had evidently for some time past been leading a life to kill any man; and, on the other hand, that as a specimen of the good old times, the very general contemporary suspicion that some one of the many powerful persons, to whom this able intriguer was obnoxious, *had* accelerated the process of exhaustion comes much to the same thing, as evidence of character, as if the deed itself were chronicled.

Infessura,* the diarist of the papal court, does indeed say, without intimating any doubt upon the subject, "*fù atossicato*"—"he was poisoned;" but he does not say by whom; and the Cardinal did not travel directly from Venice to Rome. The Archbishop of Florence had recently died in the last months of 1473, and though it is by no means a very rich see, the Pope thought it worth adding to the long list of preferment held by the Cardinal, who, as the amount of his debts shows, really was hard pressed for money, and needed a little help. So Cardinal Peter passed by Florence on his way to Rome, just to pick up the windfall that had come to him in that city.

If therefore he were really poisoned, it is just as likely that it should have been done at Florence as at Venice;—more so, indeed, inasmuch as his sojourn in Florence was nearer to the time of his death. And it is very certain that that branch of the black art was as well understood on the banks of the Arno, as on the shores of the Adriatic.

* Rer. Ital. Script. tom. ccxxxii. part ii. p. 1144. Ammirato says that he was believed to have been killed by "troppa copia di piaceri,"—by too immoderate indulgence in pleasure. Lib. xxiii. Conf. 1096.

A.D. 1474. And the amount of suspicion thus resting on Florence,—which means of course on Lorenzo de' Medici,—may have been, and in all probability was, another item in the bill of sacerdotal hate that was being rapidly scored up against him by Pope Sixtus.

This enmity began to show itself in various other ways. Instead of entering into the league of Venice, Florence, and Milan, as they were invited to do by the leaving of a place for them to do so, the Pope and the King drew closer together, and disclosed the *animus* which influenced them by various acts of quasi-hostility. One which angered the Florentines greatly, was the seduction from their service of their old general Frederick of Urbino, who was, since the death of the great captains of the middle of that century, considered to have the highest military reputation in Italy. It was known moreover in Florence, that Sixtus and his ally the king were sounding the minds of the different tyrants of the cities of the Romagna with a view to hostilities with the great Commonwealth, and were endeavouring to rouse the Sienese against their old rivals.

Niccolò Vitelli was still holding Città di Castello against the Pope, and in the early spring of that year, 1474, made a very successful sortie against the Papal forces, making great slaughter of them, and especially of the officers.* The Florentines thereupon openly sent troops, on the excuse that their town of Borgo San Sepolcro was threatened. And the anger of the overbearing and high-handed Sixtus was still further excited against Florence. The Conte Frederigo da Urbino was sent by the Pope against the city and its rebellious lord, and took it; and "the Pope had the sovereignty free and delivered up to him on the 1st day of September, 1474, and drove out Messer Niccolò Vitelli, who had governed it after his own fashion."†

* Ammirato, lib. xxiii. Gonf. 1099.

† Morelli, Ricordi, *loc. cit.* p. 190, vol. xix.

Still matters for the present remained quiet, though the political horizon became more and more lowering: and Florence thought it prudent to assure herself of her alliances. On the 4th of November came letters to the Signory from Messer Tommaso Soderini, who had been sent to Venice, announcing that he had succeeded in renewing an offensive and defensive league with Venice for another twenty-five years. The news was received with great rejoicing in Florence, and the extra-sacred picture of the Black Virgin was brought into the city from Impruneta, as on occasions of great need or thanksgiving, and was received with the utmost devotion, and with large presents of cloth and of wax. A.D. 1475.

In the following January a great and solemn tournament was held on the Piazza of Santa Croce, and there were two-and-twenty knights "very nobly arrayed with jewels and pearls in quantity; and Giuliano, the son of Piero the son of Cosmo, had the first prize; and Jacopo, the son of Messer Luca Pitti, had the second." *

But it became every day more evident that the enmity of the Pope against Florence, and especially against the two Medicean brothers,—who might now, without much exceeding the truth, say of the Florentine Commonwealth what the Grand Monarque said of France,—would not continue long without manifesting itself in some act of overt hostility. Still, however, for a while there was peace in Italy and tranquillity within the walls of Florence; such peace as could be between peoples of similar blood and language living in a chronic state of snarling watchfulness and mutual suspicion; and such tranquillity as was compatible with increasing embarrassment in the public finances, increasing cumulation of wealth in a few hands simultaneously with increasing poverty

* Morelli, Ricordi, *loc. cit.* p. 190, vol. xix.

A.D 1475. among the masses; increasing luxury, increasing costliness of life, increasing magnificence in the ornamentation of the city, and increasing prosperity and contentment of all that was worst and most corrupt in the city, together with the proportionally increasing discontent of all who had worth enough to help in keeping the social mass from going utterly to corruption and dissolution. In truth the magnificent Lorenzo would have been justified by the realities of the case, though the name was wanting to him, in calling his rule an imperial rule. Yet the Medicean ideas were characterized by some features which have claimed the indulgent consideration of subsequent generations, and have received it indeed in far greater than merited measure. Lorenzo de' Medici did not drive from him the best minds of his time and nation. He did not make war on intellect. He did not proscribe thought, or endeavour to shackle the expression of it. It had not yet been found out with the certainty which subsequent experience has so abundantly supplied, how incompatible all that expands and ennobles the human intelligence is with the security of magnificent princes and the splendours of imperial rule. Warnings, which were weighty with the teaching of this truth were not far off; they were even then on the road from ducal Milan, as they have since come to frightened sovereigns of the magnificent sort from so many another seat of splendour. But Lorenzo had not yet learned this most baleful of all the chapters of the despot's manual. It is true that the Laurentian epoch was no longer that of the great intellects which had made Florence a place of pilgrimage for the thinkers of all subsequent ages. But the rule of Lorenzo did not so cripple all virile thinking as to make the current literature of his country a byeword for worthlessness among the surrounding peoples. He did not divide the sunshine of his splendour between orthodox state religionism and the brilliant vice of notorious immo-

rality, in such sort as to produce from the unspeakably loathsome alliance of the two, an intensity of social corruption and universal abyss-covering hypocrisy, such as to make even its own disciples feel it to be inevitably destined to engulf the whole of them and their world at some future day, and perhaps on each to-morrow. Though Lorenzo de' Medici did fraudfully make himself the despot in all save name of a free people, these things were wanting to complete his title to the execration of every lover of humanity in subsequent ages. A.D. 1476.

Still, the ills which imperialism is heir to were not wanting to warn Lorenzo of the precipitous elevation of conquerors whose triumph is over the liberties of their countrymen.

These things were coming. But before they came a startling warning reached the Medicean brothers from Milan. Cola Montano, the scholar, had at length completed his readings of Roman history with those three pupils of his:—Giovanni Andrea Lampugnano, Girolamo Olgiato, and Carlo Visconti. And "on the 28th day of December, 1476, news came to us from Milan, how, on St. Stephen's day, the Duke of Milan, being in the church of St. Stephen to hear a mass, was there killed by the knife of a certain Baron of that country called Giovannandrea. Two ambassadors were sent hence, clothed in black, together with all their attendants." * And with that the diarist passes on to other matters.

But it can hardly be doubted, I think, that the tidings remained somewhat longer in the minds of the Medicean brothers, and made a somewhat deeper impression upon them. Here was the splendid prince, who had been so recently rivalling them in the pride of his youth, and the

* Morelli, Ricordi, *op. cit.* tom. xix. p. 192.

A.D. 1476. gorgeousness of his magnificence, and the recklessness of his profusion, put an end to by a single knife as he stands unprotected in a church. Heavens and earth! Are there no knives thirsting for *our* blood? No opportunities when we stand unprotected in churches, thinking only of our "religious duties," as becomes orthodox princes? And what remedy? The traitor perished! tortured, drawn, quartered, torn with hot pincers! But there is poor consolation in that for him who is exposed to such dangers. Nay, the certainty that the assassin must perish, joined to the fact that that certainty did not deter him from the deed, is the most alarming feature in the matter. We tyrants then are hated to that degree that men will face certain death for the pleasure of extinguishing us! A most disagreeable subject of reflection for a magnificent Lorenzo, or other such splendid prince.

CHAPTER V.

Danger of Lorenzo's quarrel with the Pope—What the Church demanded from lay princes in that day—Various things in which Lorenzo had offended the Pope—The Pazzi, rivals in trade of the Medici—The banking business of the Papal court transferred to them from the Medici—Elements of the party devoted to the Medici in Florence—Elements of the party opposed to them—The Pazzi family—Andrea de' Pazzi—Jacopo de' Pazzi—Causes of their enmity to the Medici—Moderation of Giuliano de' Medici—Francesco de' Pazzi—Archbishopric of Pisa—Francesco Salviati—Imprudence of Lorenzo de' Medici—Girolamo Riario—Morality of the times in the matter of taking away life—Character of Francesco de' Pazzi—First germs of the conspiracy—Character of Francesco Salviati—Difficulties in the way of the execution of the plot—Opportunity for marching Papal troops to the frontier of Tuscany—Complicity of Pope Sixtus in the plot—Giovanni Battista di Montesecco joins the conspirators—His confession—Importance of this document—Account taken from it of Montesecco's first interviews with the conspirators—Account from the same document of his mission to Florence—and of his interview there with Jacopo de' Pazzi—Of his interview with the Pope—Undeniable evidence of the Pope's complicity—Montesecco's account of the preparations of the conspirators at Florence—Character of Jacopo de' Pazzi—Manifest worthlessness of the testimony of Poliziano—Project for killing Lorenzo during his purposed journey to Rome—Montesecco's account of his second interview with the Pope—The Cardinal Raffaello Girolamo—is brought by the conspirators to Florence—Invited by the Medici to a banquet at Fiesole—The plan of killing the Medici brothers on that occasion frustrated by the absence of Giuliano—The Medici at the cathedral on 26th of April—Montesecco refuses to strike the blow in the church—Others hurriedly found to take his place—Arrangements for the doing of the deed—The murder of Giuliano—Escape of Lorenzo—Pursuit of the conspirators—The part assigned to the Archbishop of Pisa—Petrucci the Gonfaloniere—Scene in the Palazzo Pubblico—Jacopo de' Pazzi in the Piazza—The Archbishop hung by the Gonfaloniere—Others of the conspirators executed with him—The Pazzi hunted down throughout the city—Proscription of the entire family—Execution of Jacopo de' Pazzi—Outrages to his dead body—Other executions—One

A.D. 1478. of the assassins followed to Constantinople, and brought thence to execution—Judicial sentences against all concerned in the conspiracy.

If there is one rule more necessary than another for a despot to observe in striving to reduce the dangers that must surround his throne, it is, that he should keep on good terms with the Church. The prudence of so doing, or rather the imprudence of neglecting to do it, is so obvious, that few of those whose tyranny has made them odious to humanity have neglected that precaution. Nor is the rule one which it is difficult to observe. All churches in all times and countries, as soon as their "establishment" had justified them in assuming that venerable name in its secular and more generally understood sense, have been willing—of course for the most desirable and excellent ends of their own—to lend their support to the temporal power in existence, without very narrowly scrutinizing its character or foundation, in return for a share of the authority it has wielded. In the days of Lorenzo de' Medici, the bargain might have been made on the easiest possible terms. It has never been necessary in order to secure the favour and support of the Church, to abstain from any of those vices and sins which are especially dear to despots, and which make the head and front of their offending against mankind. It has rarely been necessary that a tyrant should even affect the possession of any of those virtues, or freedom from those vices, which go to the making up of a character of ordinary morality. But it has usually been needful for the acquisition of the favour of the Church, that the Prince who would stand well with her should at least profess orthodox principles of belief and zeal for the "purity of the faith."

But not even this was in any wise necessary in the days and country of Lorenzo de' Medici. A magnificent prince with literary and philosophic tastes might consort with learned men whose pagan sentiment was as notorious

as their erudition. They might reward such friends with ecclesiastical preferment carved from the fattest portions of the Church's inheritance. They might prefer Platonism to Christianity, if such was their taste, or might amuse themselves with elaborating the strangest and most impossible mixtures of the two systems at their pleasure. To all this a tolerant and easy-going Church, not yet startled into earnestness by alarm, as innocent of persecution as an over-fed tiger is innocent of active ferocity, made no sort of objection. Only the Church's High Priest, who after all *is* a sovereign, must not be tripped up in his walk as such. A.D. 1478.

And this was just what Lorenzo did. We have seen how he showed his sympathy for a brother tyrant at Città di Castello, in rebellion against the Holy Father. And then, worse still, it was very well known that he had done his utmost to upset the arrangement with the Duke of Milan, by which Girolamo, the Pope's "nephew," and the intended founder of the princely family, was to get possession of the city and lordship of Imola. Girolamo Riario had obtained this object of his ambition; but he had none the more pardoned Lorenzo. Nor was the Pope at all likely to be one whit more forgiving. On the contrary, he did everything in his power, both in great matters and in small, to show his spite, and to mortify the man and the family he hated.

There were, besides more important moves on the great political chess-board, many smaller but not less irritating modes in which this might be done within the city of Rome and the limits of the Pope's absolute power. The Medici had a bank in the eternal city, one of the most important of the many branch establishments which carried on their trading and banking operations in almost every part of the civilized world. But they were not the only Florentine family who had an establishment of this kind in Rome. They had rivals; and it is very easily understood that this circumstance must have given rise to many

A.D. 1478. opportunities for petty persecution at the hands of such a government as that which ruled Rome. None such were suffered to slip by the Pope, and by his family and their creatures. But the cruellest cut of all in this kind, was the taking away from the Medici of the treasurership to the Apostolic chamber, which at the accession of Sixtus had been given, as has been seen, to Lorenzo, and bestowing the important and very lucrative appointment on a rival Florentine firm. This Pope Sixtus and his so-called nephew did; and hated Lorenzo and his brother all the more because they credited them with all the hatred of themselves, which they were conscious this step would generate in the Medicean brothers. The new recipients of the Pope's favour were moreover selected with a view to make the blow as painful as possible to the insulted Medici. For the Pazzi to whom the treasurership was given, were not only the commercial opponents of the Medici at Rome, but their most bitter and notable political opponents at Florence.

The strength of the Medicean position at Florence, and the component parts of that majority of the citizens which made up the body of their adherents, may be easily understood from observing the progress and working of the main events of Florentine history from the time when Giovanni, the father of Cosmo de' Medici, won the hearts of the poorer citizens and populace, by the establishment of the "catasto." Ever since that time the Medici had been traditionally considered as the "people's friends." And a skilful and liberal expenditure of the Medicean wealth in the ways in which such "people's friends" know well how to expend it, joined to the absence of any save unfavourable recollections of any other of the aristocratic classes, had succeeded in keeping the masses still firmly attached to that family. The new men, rapidly rising into wealth under the influence of the Medicean prosperity,

comprising the large class who partook of the sweets of office, and fattened on the flagrant administrative corruption (indicated in that remarkable extract from Cavalcanti * in a previous chapter),—all these were of course staunch Mediceans. To these must be added the class, far larger and far more influential than it had ever been in any other time or community since the incursion of the barbarians into Italy, of literary men, scholars and philosophers, who all flocked from far and wide to share in the pickings of that rich and rare banquet provided by immense commercial wealth, combined with enthusiastic appreciation of learning and its professors. A.D. 1478.

All these men were friends and supporters of the Medici, and they were scholars and literary men of just the sort that a despot may encourage without danger,—the safest of all possible intellectual ornaments for the court of a splendid prince desirous of acquiring the renown of a patron of literature and learning. They were men, almost without exception, whose study of Plato's Republic would never lead them to doubt the excellency or meddle with the management of any other republic in which they found bread so thickly buttered as that which Medicean patronage offered them at Florence. They were well-nigh exclusively students, who busied their minds with words rather than with things; grammarians, rhetoricians, the resurrectionists

* The picture of the state of Florence there given by the contemporary chronicler, is curiously confirmed by the words put by Guicciardini the historian into the mouth of Capponi in the dialogue which has been frequently cited. "That which Lorenzo did for himself," Capponi is represented as saying, "he did not know how, or would not, or could not with any decency refuse to his friends. Many of them were allowed to avail themselves of the public money, which was drawn from the blood and the bones of the poor citizens, and which even in some cases formed the dower of unfortunate girls." The method of providing for girls by purchasing a dower on marriage for them in the public funds, and the scandalous failure of the government to redeem the obligations it had assumed on this head, have been explained.

A.D. 1478. of a dead literature, which needed to pass into other hands than theirs before the living spirit which yet was to be evoked from its remains could be made to speak words of power or of danger. Cola Montano was *not* a Medicean satellite, though a scholar; nor a friend of the Medici, as the reader may in due time have occasion to observe.

All these men—(most of their names may be read, and the nature of their productions and of the minds of many of them seen in the pages of Roscoe)—were component parts, and not unimportant parts of the Medicean party.

The opponents and enemies of the Medici consisted of the remnants of the old families who had been driven out by them from power and influence, and in great part absolutely from the city. The most of these old families were not members of that oldest of all the Florentine aristocracies which had once been feudal lords, grown into Ghibelline citizens, and ultimately had been altogether disfranchised and almost deprived of civil rights as "nobles." These families had nearly disappeared under the results of reiterated proscriptions and persecutions. The majority of the "old" families of the time of which we are speaking were the new aristocracy which had arisen and gradually succeeded in establishing that oligarchical government which was finally overthrown at the time of the return of Cosmo from banishment. The members of this aristocracy had been scattered by repeated sentences of exile all over Europe. They had been well-nigh ruined by enormous fines. Nevertheless there was a remnant in the city which lived excluded from office and influence, and nourished in their inmost hearts a more or less audaciously manifested or sullenly concealed hatred for the Medicean name and power.

And of these families the Pazzi were the chief in wealth since the downfall and political extinction of Luca Pitti, and the chief in the largeness of the place they occupied in

the eyes of their fellow-citizens since the death of Neri Capponi. These Pazzi, originally feudal landowners and established at Fiesole, boasted, not without some shreds of evidence in their favour, of a Roman origin. They had at a very early period, however, become Florentine citizens, and, unlike the majority of the families of feudal origin, had always been Guelph, and had as far back as any records remain to show given themselves to commerce. Those historians, whom Napier in his History of Florence * has followed, who confound this family with the Pazzi of Val d' Arno, which was totally distinct in lineage and armorial bearings, are in error.† At Florence the Fiesole Pazzi had thriven and multiplied,—had applied themselves to commerce, and had become wealthy. But they had still been nobles, and as such had been excluded from all the offices and honours of the Commonwealth by Giano della Bella in 1292. And so they had continued till restored to eligibility to civic office, together with various other families, by Cosmo de' Medici after his return from banishment in 1434. Andrea de' Pazzi, at that time the head of the family, was, by virtue of this restoration, made a member of the Signory in 1439. By his extensive banking operations and other trading he increased the wealth of the family till it was believed to rank next in this respect to the Medici themselves. A.D. 1478.

This Andrea left three sons, Jacopo, Piero, and Antonio. Jacopo, who had been made Cavaliere by the Commonwealth, and who had served as Gonfaloniere in 1469, was the head of the family at the time which we have now reached, 1478. He had an illegitimate daughter to whom he had given his name, and who was brought up in his house, but no other children.

* Florentine History. By H. E. Napier. 6 vols. Lond. 1847, vol. iii. p. 371.

† See Litta, Fam. Pazzi.

A.D. 1478. But his brother Piero, who was Gonfaloniere in 1462,* and who probably died shortly afterwards,—certainly before the time of which we are now speaking—had nineteen children by his wife Fiammetta of the Giugni family. Of these there were seven sons living in 1478, Andrea, Niccolò, Lionardo, Renato, Giovanni, Antonio, and Galeotto.

Antonio, the other brother, died before 1478, leaving besides six daughters, three sons, Guglielmo, Giovanni, and Francesco, all living in 1478.

The family, therefore, at the time of which we are speaking was not only powerful from its rank and wealth, but also from its great numbers.

Cosmo de' Medici had, as has been said, restored the family in the person of Andrea to civic honours; and following out his usual policy of conciliation and moderation, had given his granddaughter Bianca, the sister of Lorenzo, to Guglielmo, the grandson of Andrea, and son of Antonio de' Pazzi. But Lorenzo, less prudent, more firmly and avowedly possessed of a power above that of the constitution, more haughty and overbearing than his grandfather, and more accustomed to consider himself superior to all the rest of his fellow-citizens, pursued a different line of conduct towards the Pazzi. He believed himself to be already beyond the necessity of conciliating those who ought to have been his equals, and was bent on depressing a family which might possibly rivalize either politically or commercially with his own. Under the influence of Lorenzo,—under his rule it would be more correct to say, though of course he was as yet but the wire-puller who directed the acts of a Signory composed of his creatures,—no Pazzi had enjoyed any one of the numerous offices of the Commonwealth from 1462 to 1478.

* Ammirato, lib. xxiv. Conf. 1120, says in 1461. But he is in error.

And so marked an exclusion could not but produce a bitter feeling of animosity in the minds of all the members of the family. A.D. 1478.

To this was added another cause of animosity. Giovanni, one of the three sons of Antonio, had married Beatrice, the only child of Giovanni Borromeo, a man of immense wealth. He died intestate, and according to Florentine law his daughter was his sole heiress. But his nephew Carlo attempted to set aside her claim, and an *ex post facto* law was passed, which, with monstrous and audacious iniquity, disinherited the daughter, and made her cousin heir to her father's property in her stead. Lorenzo de' Medici had been determined at all hazards to prevent the great rival banking house from being enriched by a vast accession of property, which would have probably made their wealth a match for that of the Medici, and perhaps even have rendered their coffers the more powerful of the two.* Undeniable testimony to the action and motives of Lorenzo in this matter is to be found in the historian Guicciardini's recently published dialogue "On the Government of Florence." Piero Capponi is there made to say, after recapitulating the various modes of oppression and injustice of which the Medici, and especially Lorenzo, had been guilty: "After these things necessarily comes suspicion. For the consciousness that such conduct cannot be pleasing to any save the bad and basely self-interested, causes all others to become the objects of suspicious vigilance. For this reason tyrants are forced to watch the doings of every one, and to depress all those who seem to them either too powerful or

* Roscoe of course attempts to show that Lorenzo was free from all blame in this matter; but his defence breaks down entirely,—as will be seen by any one who will compare his statement on the subject (chap. iv. of the Life of Lorenzo) with the impartial and unimpeachable testimony of Litta, Fam. Pazzi, article Giovanni, tab. vii. The obscure passage in the sportive letter of Pulci, printed by Roscoe in his Appendix, on which he relies for his plea of alibi, seems to relate to some other matter.

A.D. 1478. too intelligent. Hence arose the wronging of the Pazzi by an iniquitous law, which took from them the inheritance of the Borromei, and the persecution of that family in so many ways, that desperation drove them into that conspiracy, from which arose such infinite evils."* It is recorded that Giuliano, more mild in disposition, and more prudent also, as it would seem, than his haughty and grasping brother, the magnificent Lorenzo, remonstrated with him on the occasion of this outrageous robbery and wrong, urging that it might well be that "they might lose all by attempting too much."† But his remonstrance was of no avail; and the Pazzi, who well knew the hand which dealt them this blow, though it was—all too ineffectually—hidden behind the action of the ordinary tribunals, were excited to yet fiercer and more unrestrainable hatred against their enemies.

Francesco de' Pazzi, the brother of Giovanni, in whose person the family had been thus wronged, seems to have resented the injury more vehemently than his brother, who was the more immediate object of it. It became intolerable to him to live in Florence, where his family was not only deprived in so marked a manner, that it amounted to proscription, of all the honours to which its rank and position gave it so good a right to pretend, but even the laws were perverted into instruments of oppression against the members of it;—and this, too, at the hands of an upstart family to which he deemed his own to be immeasurably superior in every respect. And the Pazzi were considered a specially proud and haughty race; though the best testimony on the subject does not seem to warrant us in giving credit to the assertions of writers, thorough-going partizans of the Medici, who attribute every sort of moral obliquity to the more prominent members of the family.

* Opere inedite di Francesco Guicciardini, vol. ii. p. 43.

† Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 217.

Francesco went therefore to establish himself at Rome. A.D. 1478. There were very good reasons for his doing so, besides dislike of a residence in his native city. His family had, as has been said, a large banking business in the Papal capital, and he went very naturally to undertake the management of it. There was another reason also, which, apart from all other considerations, clearly made it a matter of business prudence to do so. He had happened to be acquainted with the Franciscan friar Francesco d' Albizzola, and with his so-called nephews, before his elevation to the Papacy had ever been thought of. And it was evident that there might be something to be made at Rome out of this acquaintance in more ways than one. In the change which made his family bankers and treasurers to the Pope and the Apostolical chamber instead of the Medici, this friendship of old days was no doubt operative, as well as the recently born hatred between the Pope and the Medici.

And when the change had been made, and Francesco de' Pazzi, resident in Rome, was managing the affairs of the firm, his business connection with the Pope and the Papal Court threw him into frequent personal communication with the former, which very quickly ripened into a great degree of intimacy. Francesco, smarting with his Florentine wrongs, and burning with implacable hatred against the author of them, soon found that no subject was more acceptable to the ears of Sixtus, than abuse of the Medici. He became specially intimate with Girolamo della Rovere, the new lord of Imola also, who had his own personal reasons for hating Lorenzo, and had not forgotten all that the Medici had done to impede his acquisition of that city.

There was yet another cause of enmity between the Medici and the Pope, which must be specially mentioned, because the person who was the cause of it played a very

A.D. 1478. conspicuous part in the events which followed. Filippo de' Medici, of a younger branch of the family, who had held the archbishopric of Pisa, had recently died. It was an important piece of preferment, being then, as it still is, by far the richest see in Tuscany. And Sixtus seized the opportunity of giving it to Francesco Salviati, the man who, he knew, would be of all others the most unacceptable to the Medici, belonging to a family as hostile to them as the Pazzi. Florence, acting of course under the impulsion of Lorenzo, refused to give him possession of the temporalities of the See; and Francesco Salviati was not a man to care much for aught else belonging to it. He *was* a man to resent bitterly and dangerously the hostile treatment which he experienced from the Medici; and as hostility to the Medici was the recommendation which induced the Pope to give the preferment to a man who had no other fitness for the appointment, his exclusion from the rights attached to it may have served the purposes of Sixtus better than his unquestioning admission to them might have done;—though not the less for that did the Pontiff add this contumacious resistance to his will to the long account of his griefs and resentments against the Medici.

It was a very dangerous mass of heaving and fermenting hatred that Lorenzo had thus allowed to accumulate against him. The thorough-going and implacable hate of a large and powerful Florentine family was no trifling source of disquietude to a fellow-citizen, and especially to one in the position of Lorenzo de' Medici. To this he had added the most dangerous enmity that could be roused against any man; that of an ambitious, worldly, and thoroughly unscrupulous Pope; and had completed the combination by the further addition of a second widely-spreading family, which he had injured unforgiveably in the person of an Archbishop. The tendency and complexion of the times militated in Lorenzo's favour as strongly as they had

encouraged him in his audacious confidence in the strength of his position, and in the proverbial good fortune of the Medici. But Cosmo would not have acted as he did; and it may be very safely asserted that if he had done so, he would never have left the legacy of nearly a full-blown though not yet entirely developed despotic power to his descendants. A.D. 1478.

Girolamo Riario, lord of Imola, was, as far as may be judged from what history has recorded of him, by no means so bad a man as his brother the Cardinal. He was a true soldier instead of being a false and thoroughly corrupted priest. He was neither better nor worse than his contemporaries of the same class; whereas, bad as Churchmen then were, it cannot be supposed that there were many such as the Cardinal Pietro Riario. Girolamo was now a sovereign prince; and the attributes of sovereignty, as they were then understood, were apt to produce an obliquity of moral vision, which caused the deeds of those invested with them to appear not only to their own consciences, but to the judgment of their contemporaries, in a very different light from those of other men. The executive administration of criminal justice, which was deemed to be properly held in the hands of a sovereign ruler, was dispensed after a fashion which made it difficult to say where judicial punishment ended and murder began. And a confusion of mind on the subject was generated, which, if it did not make any taking away of life on the plea of state expediency absolutely allowable, yet so destroyed the natural promptings of the conscience on the subject, that the thought of murder for any object, which could be in any way considered one of public or political necessity, presented itself to fifteenth-century minds in very different colours from those which it wears to the most hardened conscience in our days. As long as the Medici ruled in Florence, Count Girolamo was justified in

A.D. 1478. thinking that his usurped sovereignty at Imola was insecure. And any scheme for removing the Medici was to him therefore merely a question of prudence.

Nor was it impossible for Francesco de' Pazzi to represent to himself that his conspiring to the same end was not a mere indulgence of his own hatred and passion for revenge. The Medici were undeniably, visibly, destroying the liberties of their country,—those liberties which blood in torrents had so often been shed without scruple to secure. There were precedents enough in Florentine annals without going back to old stories of Harmodius and Brutus. Would not any Florentine, who struck down the usurper from his ill-gotten place of power, deserve well of his fellow-citizens? It was not difficult for a man in the position of Francesco de' Pazzi to think so. It is very credible that in his inmost heart he thought as doubtless many a good man of that time thought, that to risk life in the attempt to take that of such a one as Lorenzo was a noble and heroic deed. The thought, that even if it were so, his private wrongs should have made him of all men the most unfitted to become the executioner of a nation's justice on a tyrant, was not one for that century. On the contrary, according to the code of honour and morality prevailing in that time and country, it was for a man who had received such injuries as Francesco had received from the Medici, a thing to boast and to be proud of, that he had struck the wrong-doer to the heart;—and if from behind or in the dark, the better; so that it were the surer and the safer way to do the deed.

This Francesco was, says Poliziano, "like all the other Pazzi, unspeakably given to anger. He was small of stature, slight in person, of muddy complexion, with exceedingly light hair, of which he was said to take excessive and unreasonable care. Add to this that his whole mode of bearing in person and in feature, and his every gesture,

were such as to show unmistakeably his incredible pride; which however, without much success, he strove to hide. He was in brief a man of blood, who, when he meditated any design, went right away to his aim, and in doing so was hindered by no regard for morality, or religion, or reputation, or fair fame." * A.D. 1478.

Poliziano, who was one of the eminent scholars whom the Medici had gathered around them, was attached to the family, and had been the tutor of Lorenzo and Giuliano in their boyhood, and remained their devoted friend, adherent, and intimate. He has written a short history of the conspiracy, of which the story is now to be told, in a spirit of the most thorough-going partizanship, without any pretence of impartiality. And subsequent writers have warned their readers that little faith is to be placed in the unmeasured abuse which he heaps on all those concerned in the plot.

Macchiavelli says of Francesco de' Pazzi simply, that he was more courageous, and more sensitive than the other members of his family.† That he was a bold, resentful, passionate man, little scrupulous of that which, according to our notions, a man should scruple to do, may well be believed. But that he was such a man, or that he had so lived as to forfeit his fair reputation among his contemporaries, that he was regarded otherwise than with respect and esteem by them, there does not seem any reason to believe.

Between these two men, the Conte Girolamo Riario, and Messer Francesco de' Pazzi, who fell into habits of intimate

* Angelo Poliziano, Della Congiura dei Pazzi. The original work is in Latin, much admired for its style. It was printed in the year in which the circumstances related took place; but became so rare as to be almost unknown till it was reprinted at Naples in 1769. The citation in the text is from the Italian translation published at Capolago in 1847, together with some other short pieces by other authors, p. 304.

† Ed. cit. vol. ii. lib. viii. p. 217.

A.D. 1478. association at Rome, the first idea of the plot, which has become famous in Italian history as "the Conspiracy of the Pazzi," appears to have arisen. "They frequently grumbled together against the Medici, insomuch, that after much complaining of them, they came to the conclusion, as they could not but come," says Macchiavelli,* whose words I am quoting, "that if the one of them wished to live secure in the possession of his dominions, and the other to be in safety in his native city, it was absolutely necessary to bring about a change in the government of Florence;"—a phrase which was a mere euphuism, of which the perfectly well understood meaning was that the two Medicean brothers must die.

The first step the two plotters took was to communicate their design to Salviati, the Archbishop of Pisa, who at once, and as it would seem, without any hesitation, promised his zealous assistance and co-operation. Not only was he eager to remove the obstacles which prevented him from enjoying the emoluments of his see, and to avenge himself on those who had raised these, but he hoped, we are distinctly told,† to make himself more acceptable to the Pope by bringing about a consummation which he knew would be, more than aught else, agreeable to him.

Of this Archbishop, Poliziano says, that "he was, as all the world knows, an ignorant man, a contemner of all law human and divine, a man steeped in crime and in disgrace of every sort, abandoned to self-indulgence, and infamous for his dealings as a go-between. He was a gambler too, a vain and shallow man, much skilled in flattery, and at the same time audacious, ready, cunning, and impudent. And it was by these qualities—so shameless is Fortune—that he had gained his archbishopric."

* Ed. cit. vol. ii. lib. viii. p. 218. † Ammirato, lib. xxiv. Conf. 1120.

The absurdity of this phrase,—"so shameless is Fortune!"—is in some degree a measure of the worth of Poliziano's treatise. Archbishops were not chosen by lot, but selected by the Pope. And the writer must have perfectly well known where the shamelessness was, which had not hesitated to raise such a man to such an office. For though little credit can be given to the wholesale invective, with which Poliziano assails every one who was engaged in the conspiracy, heaping together, as in this character of the Archbishop, all sorts of curiously incompatible evil qualities, there is sufficient reason to believe from other sources, that Jacopo Salviati was not the man of whom an archbishop should have been made. Bruto, trustworthy always, and assuredly not likely to judge too harshly any enemies of the Medici, says that Salviati was not such a man as Florence would have wished to see an archbishop. A.D. 1478.

He at once entered heart and soul into the designs of the two original conspirators; but pointed out to them the absolute necessity of providing the means of controlling the populace, when the main deed should have been done. For there was no possibility of concealing or doubting the fact, that, if the enterprise in hand was the liberation of a people from the yoke of a tyrant, who had made himself its ruler by fraud and illegal usurpation, yet this liberation must be effected against the will of the people to be liberated. All the arguments, more or less plausible, which may be urged in favour of the righteousness of such a deed have been used too often for it to be necessary to repeat them here. And there is the less reason to do so, that there is every ground for believing that the men, of whom we are speaking, troubled themselves but little with any such reasonings or thoughts. They felt themselves to be unjustly injured, and wrongfully treated, and that in such sort that nothing short of the death of the wrong-doer

A.D. 1478. could remedy the grievance. And this to minds constituted and educated as theirs were, was an indubitably sufficient warranty for the deed.

The difficulty, however, which Salviati brought to their consideration was evident and undeniable. It was certain that a great majority of the population of Florence was friendly to the Medici, and favourable to the continuance of their political ascendancy. There was every reason to fear that the deaths of Lorenzo and his brother might be followed by a rising of the populace not in favour of, but against the authors of the deed. Much might no doubt be hoped from the general confusion into which the city would be thrown by the sudden removal of its chiefs; much from the certainty in the minds of the upper classes that nothing could restore the Medicean power, and that some other power must succeed to it, and new paths be opened to new ambitions; much also from the tendency among the lower orders to take part with those whose success had already placed them on the winning side. Still Salviati represented that, even supposing the fatal blow were struck, and the two Medici fairly killed,—a part of the business which all the conspirators seem to have considered as that which presented the least difficulty,—it was very doubtful how matters might go in the city, and that it was absolutely necessary to provide the means of forcibly controlling the people.

Now it happened, that circumstances afforded a favourable opportunity for moving a Papal force towards Florence under a colourable excuse, which was not likely to excite any great suspicion in that city. One Carlo da Montone, had been attacking the Sienese, endeavouring to set on foot intrigues in Perugia, and otherwise disturbing the peace of Italy. And it was determined that Papal troops should be sent to the immediate neighbourhood of the Florentine frontier for the ostensible purpose of punishing and re-

ducing to obedience that turbulent noble. It does not follow, perhaps, from the fact that the conspirators had been able to make this arrangement that the Pope was cognizant of the affair from the earliest stages of it. For the Conte Girolamo Riario, as Gonfaloniere of the Church, was doubtless competent to give the necessary orders for such a movement of troops. But it is of small consequence to know precisely at what stage of the business the Pope became one of the conspirators engaged in the design to murder the Medicean brothers. It is abundantly proved that he was not only cognizant of the plot, but was a consenting party to it. A.D. 1478.

Much has been written subsequently with the endeavour to wipe this stain from the memory of Sixtus and the character of the Papacy. And it is true, that the most direct and remarkable testimony we have to the fact of the Pontiff's complicity, represents the Pontiff as refusing to authorise bloodshed. The reader shall have the means of forming his own opinion of the value of this refusal from the words themselves of this very remarkable document. We all know,—for the world has seen but too many examples of the kind,—the mode in which men in high places express their desire for the commission of atrocities, which they do not care openly to command. At all events, heretical morality is able to see very little difference between the conduct of a Pope, who knowing that such a design is contemplated, and who could by a word prevent the execution of it, yet does nothing, and utters no word to stay its perpetration, and the crime of one who should avowedly authorise and command it. As to the Pope's general complicity in the conspiracy, however, we have the unsuspected evidence of Stefano Infessura, the Roman diarist, who categorically asserts that, "these things,—(the murder of the Medici),—were ordered by Pope Sixtus, together with the Count Girolamo, and others,

A.D. 1478. to take away the dominion from Lorenzo de' Medici, and give it to the Count Girolamo." And here the thoroughly well informed writer gives us also the ultimate scope of the crime.

The Conte Girolamo Riario, Francesco de' Pazzi, and the Archbishop Salviati, having determined on making the attempt, considered that it was necessary to secure the assistance of some man of action, whose nerve and arm could be depended on, and for this purpose applied to Giovanni Battista di Montesecco, a captain in the Papal service, under the command of, and specially beholden and bound to the Conte Girolamo.

Eventually this man was executed at Florence, for the share he took in the conspiracy, and his last confession, made at the moment of going to inevitable death on the scaffold, is the document above referred to, from which the best account of the progress of the plot from the point we have reached may be obtained. It may be observed that the style and manner of the paper, which the abridged extracts given below cannot reproduce, give abundant evidence of the genuineness of it; which has never, as far as I am aware, been questioned.*

"First of all," says the old soldier, whose dealings with princes and prelates had brought him to a felon's death, "I spoke with the Archbishop and Francesco de' Pazzi at Rome, in the chamber of the said Archbishop; who said that he had a secret and an idea of his to reveal to me. And then they swore me to secresy. Then the Archbishop began to speak, giving me to understand that he and Francesco had the means of revolutionizing the government of Florence, and that they were determined by all means to do so, and wished for my assistance. I answered

* It is printed, together with a number of other relations of and papers connected with the conspiracy, at the end of Adimari's edition of Poliziano's history, published at Naples in 1769.

them, that I would do all in my power to serve them; but that being a soldier of the Pope, and of the Count, I could take no part in the matter. To which they answered; 'How can you imagine that we are doing this thing without the consent of the Count? Why, our object is to exalt him, as well as ourselves, and to maintain him in his dominion. Assure yourself, that if this matter is not completed, he would not give a bean for his lordship. For Lorenzo is his enemy to the death.' And when I wished to hear why this was so, and the cause for the great enmity of Lorenzo to the Conte Girolamo, they told me many things on this head, and about the Archbishopric, and many other matters, which it would take long to recite. And finally we came to this conclusion, that if the honour and the interest of the Count were concerned, I would endeavour, to the utmost of my power, to satisfy them in all that should be commanded me by the Count. And all this was settled in common with the Archbishop and Francesco. And it was fixed that we should meet another day, when the Count should be present in person, and that it should then be determined what steps were to be taken. And so the matter remained for many days, during which nothing more was said to me. But I know that many conversations took place between the Archbishop, and the Count, and Francesco. A.D. 1478.

"One day afterwards, I was summoned by the Signor Conte to his chamber, where the Archbishop was; and he began to speak to me again of this matter, saying:

"'The Archbishop tells me that he has spoken to you of a certain affair, which we have in hand. What do you think of it?'

"I answered him; 'Signore, I do not know what to say of the matter, for I do not yet understand it. When you have explained it to me, I will tell you my opinion.'

"The Archbishop said; 'How! have I not told you, that

A D. 1478. we want to cause a revolution in the government of Florence?'

"'Yes, indeed; you told me that; but you did not tell me the way in which it was to be done. And till I have heard that, I do not know what to say.'

"Therefore they both, one and the other of them, spoke out; and began to speak of the ill-will and enmity of the Magnifico Lorenzo towards them, and of the great danger that threatened the dominions of the Count, after the death of the Pope; and that a revolution in Florence would be the means of establishing the Signor Conte in his government, so that he need fear no further mischief; and that this was the motive of the whole design. And on my asking them of the means by which the thing was to be done, and of the persons who were disposed to favour the enterprise, they said to me:

"'We have this means; that in Florence the families of the Pazzi and the Salviati can carry half the city with them.'

"'Good! but have you thought of the mode in which the matter is to be carried out?'

"'The mode I leave'—(the Count Girolamo is evidently supposed to be here speaking)—'to those * who say that it can be done in no other way, than by cutting to pieces Lorenzo and Giuliano; and who also say that they have prepared armed men, and that they are going to Florence; and that it is necessary to collect these troops in such a manner as to cause no suspicion; and that, if no suspicion is aroused, all will go well.'

"I answered him, 'Signore, you understand what it is you are about! I can certify you that this is a grave matter. Nor do I see how you are going to carry it out; for Florence is a great city, and, as I hear, the magnificence of Lorenzo has gained him great popularity.'

* *I.e.*, to Francesco de' Pazzi and the Archbishop.

"The Count replied; 'These men tell me the contrary; —that he is little loved, and the object of much ill-will; and that when he and his brother are dead, everybody will raise their hands in thanksgiving to Heaven!' A.D. 1478.

"Then the Archbishop spoke out, and said; 'Giovanni Battista, you have never been at Florence. We understand the state of things there, and the position of Lorenzo, better than you do. We know the amount of favour and of ill-will with which he is regarded by the people; and be very certain that the thing will succeed, as sure as we are here! All that is needed is, that we should resolve on the mode of action.'

"'Well! What mode is there?' *

"'The mode is this; to warm to the matter Messer Jacopo,† who is as cold as ice. When we have him, the thing is done, nor is there any ground for hesitation.'

"'Well! (said I) and how does this matter please our Lord the Pope?'

"And they answered me; 'We can always make our Lord the Pope do as we please. Besides, His Holiness hates Lorenzo. He is more anxious for this than anybody else.'

"'Have you spoken to him of it?' (said I.)

"'To be sure we have! and we will take care that he shall express himself to you also, and shall let you understand his intention. Let us think of the way to gather a sufficient force of troops together. All the rest of the matter will go well enough.'"

The condemned man then goes on to tell the arrangements that were made for gradually moving up troops towards the Florentine frontier; and explains the circumstances under which he was despatched to Florence to

* This is of course spoken by the relator, Montesecco, himself.

† The Cavaliere Jacopo de' Pazzi, the head of the family, and uncle of Francesco.

A.D. 1478. prepare the way for what was to follow. Carlo, lord of Faenza fell ill; and it became necessary, in the prospect of his death, to settle some business connected with certain lands, which the Count Girolamo claimed from him. Montesecco was ordered therefore to go to Florence, as if on his way to Faenza, on this business, so that he might inform himself of the ways and habits of the former city, and of the Medicean brothers. He was directed to seek an interview with Lorenzo, under the pretence of consulting him in the name of his employer, the Count Girolamo, as to the best method of conducting the business, on which he was to be supposed to be going to Faenza. But another important part of his instructions was to see the Cavaliere Jacopo de' Pazzi, speak to him on the subject, and endeavour to induce him to join the conspiracy.

The meeting in question is described as follows by the prisoner, who has previously related his interview with Lorenzo on the business which made his ostensible errand at Florence, and spoken of the kindness and affability with which he was received.

"Then—(after leaving Lorenzo)—I went to the Bell hostelry to dine; and having to speak to Francesco de' Pazzi, and to see the Cavaliere Jacopo, to whom I had credentials from the Signor Conte Girolamo and the Archbishop, I sent, while waiting till dinner was ready, to ask about them. I was told that Francesco had gone to Lucca; and as he was not there, I sent to Messer Jacopo to say that I had to speak to him on business of importance, and that if it so pleased him I would go to his house, or if he would come to the inn I would wait there for him. The aforesaid Messer Jacopo came to the Bell inn, when he and I withdrew into a private chamber. I saluted and complimented him on the part of our Lord the Pope and of the Signor Conte and the Archbishop, from the two latter of whom I had credential letters, one from each of

them. I presented them to him; he read them, and when he had done so, said: A.D. 1478.

"'What have we to speak about, Giovanni Battista? Are we going to talk about affairs of State?'

"I said, 'To be sure we are.'

"He answered, 'I will not hear you on any account. For those fellows are addling their brains. They want to make themselves lords of Florence. But I understand these matters here at Florence better than they do. Don't tell me a word, for I won't hear you.'

"But when I persuaded him to hear me, he contented himself to listen to me.

"'What are you talking about?' said I. 'I speak to you on the part of our Lord the Pope, with whom I talked before I left Rome. And his Holiness told me in the presence of the Conte and of the Archbishop that I was to encourage you to hasten on this business in Florence, since he (the Pope) does not know when there may be another siege of Montone,* to give an opportunity for keeping so many troops together and in readiness, and that so near your territory. And as delay would be dangerous, he urges you to do the business. There is no mistake about it. His Holiness says that he wishes for a change of government in Florence, but without the death of anybody.

"'And when I said to him in the presence of the Conte and the Archbishop, "Holy Father, these things can hardly be brought about without perhaps the death of Lorenzo and of Giuliano, and maybe of others," his Holiness said to me, "I will not have the death of any one in any wise, for it is not our office to consent to the death of anybody. And although Lorenzo is a boor, and has behaved ill

* Alluding to the circumstance which had served as an excuse for marching troops to the Tuscan frontier.

A.D. 1478. towards us, yet I would not on any account have his death; but a revolution in the government—yes!"

"'And the Count answered, "We will do all that is possible to prevent that from happening. If, however, it should happen, your Holiness will at least pardon those who may do it."

"'And the Pope answered, "Thou art a fool!"'" *

And indeed Sixtus had reason to say so. Who but a blundering fool would have sought to drive the Pope to say what he wanted to avoid saying in this maladroit manner? As if Sixtus did not know well enough that the revolution, which he said he wanted, could only be brought about by the death of the Medici! As if his statement to Montesecco, "I don't want to hear anything about it, *for* it is not my place to consent to murdering anybody," were not a sufficient hint.

"Thou art a fool!" said Sixtus. "I tell you I will not have the death of anybody, but a revolution in the government—yes! And so also I say to you, Giovanni Battista, that I desire very much, that the government of Florence should be changed, and taken out of the hands of Lorenzo; for he is a boor, and a bad man, and has no respect for us. And if he were once out of Florence, we could do with that Republic what we pleased, and it would be a great advantage to us."

It was hardly possible for the Pope to speak clearer, short of saying in so many words, "Go and do murder." He objected to say these words, and even went to the length of explaining why he objected to use them. They were not words for a Pope to use. But he knows that the men he was talking to purposed to bring about what he

* Not "a beast," as Mr. Napier translates the word in this place in his history, thereby altogether missing the sense. *Bestia* (Fr. *bête*), used in manner, this is a very common phrase in the mouth of an Italian, and always means "a fool."

wished so earnestly by means of murder;—knows that it can only be so brought about;—knows the all-importance to a man in the position of Montesecco of having an opportunity of doing anything to gratify a Pope;—yet enlarges on his great desire that the result shall be obtained; and only says, "Don't tell me anything about murder, because I ought not to hear that." And then that blundering blockhead of an illiterate soldier, Girolamo, insists, "But you will pardon the murderers, won't you, Holy Father?" Really Sixtus must have felt that his unlettered son's want of tact, stupidity, and superstition were too provoking. He might well tell him that he was a fool! His brother, the poor dear Cardinal, who is gone, would have understood matters better. "Pardon you! you great oaf of a simple muddle-headed layman! Bah! And to think that I have to work for the greatness of the Della Rovere family with such *tools* as that!" A.D. 1478.

To return, however, to the text of Montesecco's remarkable confession. On the Pope's addressing himself as above to the Captain of free-lances, "the Count and the Archbishop," he goes on to tell us, "who were present said, 'Your Holiness speaks the truth. When you have Florence in your power, and can dispose of it as you please —as will be the case when it is in their (the Pazzi's) hands—your Holiness will give the law to half Italy, and every potentate will be glad to be your friend. So that you may be content with anything that is done for that end.'

"His Holiness answered, 'I tell you that I won't have it. Go and do what you will, so that there is no bloodshed!'

"And with that we got up from before his Holiness, coming to the conclusion that he was content to give all favour and assistance of armed men, or otherwise as might be necessary for the business in hand.

A.D. 1478. "And the Archbishop answered and said, 'Holy Father, are you content that we should guide this boat, so that we guide it well?'

"And our Lord the Pope said, 'I am content.'"

The Archbishop, as became an archbishop, knew better than to talk of killing and such like ugly words before a Pope. He could say things decently, and come to a clear understanding accordingly.

"And therewith," proceeds Montesecco in his confession, "we got up from his feet, and went back again into the chamber of the Count. The matter was then discussed in detail; and it was concluded that the thing could not be compassed in any way without the death of them,—that is, of Lorenzo and his brother. And on my saying that it was a bad deed, they answered me, that great things cannot be otherwise accomplished; and on that head many examples were adduced, which it would take a long time to write.* And finally it was settled, that for coming to an understanding respecting the method to be followed, it was necessary that I should come here (to Florence) and speak with Francesco and with Messer Jacopo, and arrange with precision what was to be done, and take steps for carrying it into execution. And I came here; and not finding Francesco, we were not willing to come to any decision, further than that he (Jacopo) said to me, 'Go to Imola (where he was to see Carlo di Faenza), and at your return Francesco will be here, and we can decide what is to be done.'"

He goes on to relate how he went to Imola, and on his return journey had an interview with Lorenzo at his villa of Cafaggiuolo; how Lorenzo expressed himself most kindly

* It appears hence that this confession was written by the condemned man just before going to his execution; a fact which, taken in conjunction with the internal evidence of the style and diction of the paper, gives strong testimony to its authenticity.

towards the Conte Girolamo—(but there is no possibility of doubting the enmity and hatred which existed between the Medici and Sixtus and his son)—and how Lorenzo, being about to return from Cafaggiuolo to Florence, asked the Condottiere captain to travel with him, and talked of the affairs of the Conte Girolamo most kindly by the way. A.D. 1478.

"I arrived in Florence," he continues, "and saw Francesco, with whom I settled not to leave the city that day, in order that we might have an interview that same night with Messer Jacopo; which we had accordingly. At night Francesco came for me, and conducted me to the chamber of Messer Jacopo, where we discussed the matter; and we came to the conclusion that many things were needful for the enterprise, one of which was that the Archbishop should come to Florence under some colourable pretext."

Then he relates that there was a difference of opinion between them; Jacopo (who seems by that time to have laid aside his real or pretended scruples) being of opinion that the best plan was to wait for an opportunity, when one of the two brothers should be absent from Florence, so as to have to deal with only one at a time; while Francesco thought that the deed should in any case be done at once; "and he always had in his mind that at church, or at a game of cards, or at a wedding, or anywhere, where both of them were together he would have the courage to kill them."

He goes on to tell, that he was then sent back to Rome; and that on giving the Conte Girolamo an acconnt of his mission, it was determined that the Archbishop should at once proceed to Florence on pretence of treating the affair which has been mentioned, with Carlo of Faenza; that he himself was to return, passing by the way of Romagna, where he was to station certain troops as near the frontier as possible, in readiness for the upshot of the plot, and so

A.D. 1478. back to Florence. He found Francesco and Jacopo de' Pazzi at the villa belonging to the latter, at Montughi, about a couple of miles out of the city in the direction of Prato; and when he gave them messages from the Conte Girolamo urging expedition, they answered him, "that they had more need of a bridle than of spurring."

This would seem, indeed, to have been true enough; and Jacopo de' Pazzi appears, whatever may have been his feeling on the matter at first, to have entered into the plot with quite as much zeal as any one of the other conspirators. Poliziano writes of him: "The Cavaliere Jacopo de' Pazzi, the head of the family, used to spend day and night in gambling; and if a bad stroke of luck happened to him, he would blaspheme God and men, and would frequently in brutal passion hurl the dice-box, or anything else that he could lay his hands on, at those who stood nearest to him. Pallid in complexion, with wild staring eyes, he was always tossing his head about, and, what was a special sign of the shallow frivolity of his character, he could never keep his mouth, or his eyes, or his hands still. Two of the most heinous vices were conspicuous in him; and it is strange that they were in their nature inconsistent with each other,—an overweening avarice, and a great passion for squandering his own substance.* He threw down, to the foundations, his ancestral palace, which was magnificently built, and set about building it anew. It was his frequent habit to order work from artizans, and then refuse to pay the entire price, thus defrauding the poor people who strove to earn their bread by the labour of their hands; and then he would give them the meat of diseased swine instead of their money. For which causes he was exceedingly ill-looked on, and neither he nor his

* Had the scholarly Poliziano never heard of him, who was "alieni appetens, sui profusus"? or was he rather simply adapting the character of Catiline to the Florentine conspirator?

ancestors were ever liked by the people. Being without legitimate offspring, he was held in higher consideration by relatives, who were looking for his inheritance, than by others. But he was most negligent in the administration of his affairs. With these habits, it was but too easy for him to reduce himself to a crust;* and this acted as a special spur and incitement to him to attempt a crime. For, insolent and ambitious as he was, he could not bring his mind to endure the ignominy of ruin, and sought the means of destroying his country and himself in one vast conflagration." A.D. 1478.

Yes! that was the way Sallust described a conspirator, and so accordingly our scholarly pedagogue set about his similar task. But he had better have confined himself to the staring eyes, and restless mouth and hands. For it is rather too absurd to accuse the head of the wealthiest family save one in Florence, to which had recently been confided the responsible and enormously lucrative appointment of treasurer to the Papal court, of being a ruined man! Litta says of him: "He was a member of the *balia* of ten in 1468; was elevated to the supreme dignity of Gonfaloniere in 1469, and for the excellence of his administration was created Cavaliere by the authority of the Commonwealth . . . . He was drawn into the conspiracy against the Medici by the persevering instigations of his nephew Francesco. He was a man universally and highly esteemed, and accordingly enjoyed much authority. His intervention in the plot was therefore deemed indispensable. For a long time he hesitated, whether from horror at the crime, or from doubt respecting the success of the attempt, I do not know. He finally accepted the enterprise, when by means of a messenger from Rome, he was assured that

* The writer forgets, in the fervour of his invective, that this is somewhat inconsistent with the previous statement respecting the expectations of his relatives.

A.D. 1478. such was the will of Pope Sixtus and Ferdinand, King of Naples." To this, Macchiavelli's testimony may be added. He writes of Jacopo de' Pazzi: "Certain vices of his are spoken of, among which were gambling, and a habit of blaspheming, such as could hardly be found in the mouth of the most abandoned man. But he redeemed these vices by his abundant almsgiving and contributions to public charities. It may also be said in his favour, that on the Saturday before the deed was done, he paid to every one all he owed, that nobody might be a sufferer from the consequences of the act he was about to commit."

Montesecco goes on to speak, in his confession, of sundry other journeyings to and fro between Rome and Florence by himself and Francesco, and of a plan for taking advantage of a journey to Rome, which it was expected that Lorenzo was about to undertake about Easter time in that year. It was intended that some of the conspirators remaining at Florence should there assassinate Giuliano, while others should find an opportunity of disposing of Lorenzo on his journey.

"The Count said to me," writes he, "'Lorenzo is to come here for Easter; and as soon as we hear of his starting, Francesco (then at Rome) will immediately start hence also, and will make good speed, and serve out the one who remains at home; and as for the other, before he returns, we will see what is to be done with him; and we will so manage, that before he sets out hence the matter shall be put well in train.' I said to him, 'Will you kill him?' He answered, 'Certainly not; for I would not on any account that anything should happen to him here. But before he starts, things shall be put in such a train that all shall go well.' I asked the Count, 'Does our Lord the Pope know this?' He answered, 'To be sure he does.' Said I, 'The devil he does! It is a great thing that he consents.' He replied to me, 'Do you not know that we

make him do what we please? Enough, that all will go well.'" A.D. 1478.

Subsequently he states that at the time of this return to Rome, he had another interview with the Pope, who said to him, "and then, Giovannibattista, what about the Archbishop and Francesco? who said that they were going to do such great things; and they have not had the wit to upset the government of such a town as Florence!"

It would seem that his Holiness was getting impatient for the gratification of his hatred against the enemies whose death he would not consent to.

Lorenzo, however, gave up the notion of his projected journey to Rome; and the conspirators had to hit upon some other scheme. Once more, about Easter, they were all assembled at Florence, and were only waiting for some occasion favourable for the striking of the blow.

At that time there was a young nephew of Girolamo Riario resident for the purpose of study in the university of Pisa. This young man, Raffaello Riario, had been created Cardinal by the Pope on the preceding 10th of December; and he was now directed by letters from his uncle the Conte Girolamo, to be guided by whatsoever directions he should receive from the Archbishop Salviati. The conspirators, therefore, thinking that his presence in Florence would be likely to lead to some opportunity for the execution of their plans, caused the young Cardinal to visit the city in the first days of April, 1478. He came to the villa of Jacopo Pazzi, at Montughi; and his coming to Florence so far answered the end, for the sake of which it had been planned, that Lorenzo, according to the usual habit of the Medici, on the arrival of any stranger of distinction in the city, forthwith gave a grand entertainment in his honour. It was to be at the Medicean villa at Fiesole, and it was settled that there and then the deed should be done. But it so happened that Giuliano de'

A.D. 1478. Medici being slightly unwell did not go to the festival; and the plan had accordingly to be changed.

The conspirators, therefore, caused the young Cardinal Raffaello to say that he wished to hear mass in the Cathedral of Florence. Whereupon Lorenzo, as his enemies supposed would be the case, immediately invited him to go with him and his brother to the Cathedral, and partake of a banquet in their palace afterwards. And this party was fixed for the following Sunday, the 26th of April. And now again it was intended that the two brothers should be struck down while sitting at table; but again fate intervened; and it came to the knowledge of the conspirators, as it would seem in the course of that same Sunday morning, that Giuliano was not to be present at the feast, though he would be present at the previous mass.

There was on this occasion no time to change their plans. It was necessary that the deed should be done that morning, not only because the secret had by this time become known to so many, that any further delay in the execution became excessively dangerous; but also because orders had been sent to Francesco da Tolentino and Lorenzo da Castello, the officers in command of the Papal troops which had been stationed on the Florentine frontier, as has been explained, to march towards Florence. It therefore was suddenly determined that the thing should be done in the Church, while the two brothers were hearing mass. It was easy to arrange that some special point of the service should serve as the signal, a most important point, as of course it was above all necessary that those who were to attack the two brothers should act with perfect simultaneousness. It was settled, therefore, that the fatal blows were to be struck at the moment when the officiating priest performed the elevation of the host;—a moment which recommended itself for the purpose by the impossibility of mistaking it,

by the quietude which prevails at that most sacred point of the mystery in course of celebration, and by the bending attitude of worship, which it is the habit for every one in the church at that moment to assume. A.D. 1478.

But here almost at the last moment another difficulty arose. The old soldier Giovannibattista di Montesecco, whose confession of his part in the matter we have in part heard, declared that he had undertaken to do a murder in a dwelling-house, and that he was ready to do it; but that he could not bring his mind to strike the blow where Christ would be sure to see him!* It had been settled that Francesco de' Pazzi and one Bernardo Bandini, a resolute ruffian and trustworthy creature of the Pazzi, should undertake Giuliano, while Montesecco was to strike down Lorenzo. And the absolute refusal of the old soldier to do this under the circumstances prescribed made it necessary to provide some other agent in his place in the hurry and on the spur of the moment. Driven by this necessity, the conspirators applied to one Stefano da Bagnoni, parish priest of Montemurlo, who lived in the family of Jacopo de' Pazzi as his secretary, and Latin master to his daughter, and to Antonio Maffei da Volterra, an Apostolic notary.

Of course these two ecclesiastics had no objections on the score of those considerations which had deterred the soldier. They were quite as ready to commit murder in a church as elsewhere. But then, on the other hand, they were by the habitudes of their lives and profession very much less adapted for the purpose. And in fact it was their bungling which ruined the whole affair, and brought every one who had been connected with it, and many who had been perfectly innocent of all knowledge of it, to destruction.

At the moment agreed on, Francesco de' Pazzi and Bandini, who had placed themselves close to Giuliano as he

* Sic.

A.D. 1478. stood near the entrance to the choir, inside which was their visitor the Cardinal Raffaello, as etiquette required, simultaneously struck down their man; and Francesco, determined to make sure work, gave him no less than nineteen stabs, repeating the blows with such fury, that he inflicted on himself a bad wound in the thigh, while striking at his victim. At the same moment the two ecclesiastics attacked Lorenzo, and inflicted a slight wound in the neck. But protecting himself with much presence of mind and agility by his cloak, he escaped across the choir into "the new" sacristy, where he and those who had immediately gathered round him, shut the heavy doors in the faces of the other conspirators, who, having despatched their own man, ran to complete the work their bungling comrades had so ineffectually attempted on Lorenzo.

But he was safe in the sacristy, and of course the scheme of the conspiracy had entirely miscarried. The confusion in the Cathedral was, as may be supposed, immense. Several people, as one of the accounts tells us, thought that the pile was falling on their heads. But it soon became very evident that the conspirators had been entirely mistaken in supposing that there was any chance that the populace would side with them in the matter. As soon as the attempt and the result of it became known, Lorenzo was conducted to his palace in the midst of a concourse of citizens; while in every part of the city a hunt began for all those who were or who could be supposed to have probably been connected with the felon attempt, as fiercely indiscriminating as that which pursues the rats in a barn, when the displacement of their covert has disturbed them.

It had been arranged that Jacopo de' Pazzi and the Archbishop Salviati, together with several others, who had joined in the plot,—two members of the Salviati family,—Jacopo, the son of Poggio the historian, who was Secretary to the Cardinal Riario,—certain citizens of Perugia, exiles

whom the Pazzi had persuaded that they would when in power restore them to their homes,—and some others,—should, while the murder of the Medici was being done in the church, go and possess themselves of the Palazzo Pubblico, and endeavour to stir up the populace to revolt in the Piazza. A.D. 1478.

The Archbishop, with the Perugia men and a few others, undertook the first, and the Cavaliere Jacopo the second of these parts. And both failed equally signally in their attempts.

Cesare Petrucci, a shrewd, clever, energetic man, and a thorough-going partisan of the Medici, had become Gonfaloniere on the first day of that month of April; and he and his colleagues of the Signory were at dinner when the Archbishop came up into the palace. Rising from table at once, not to keep the Archbishop waiting, he brought him into his private room, and inquired the object of his visit. The Archbishop began some roundabout story about a message from the Pope; but spoke in such an unintelligible manner, became so confused, and changed countenance so markedly, that Petrucci, perceiving that there was something wrong, suddenly sprang out of the room, and, shutting the door on the Archbishop, ran to a window looking on to the Piazza, and there saw the Cavaliere Jacopo de' Pazzi, at the head of some hundred or so of followers, calling out to the people to rise and recover their liberties. "He called on the people and on liberty," says Macchiavelli. "But inasmuch as the one was made deaf by the liberality and the good fortune of the Medici, and the other was unknown in Florence, he got no response."

Petrucci, comprehending at a glance the whole meaning of what he saw, and at once enlightened by it as to the purpose and strange bearing of the Archbishop, lost not a moment in securing him in the chamber into which he had been shut, and calling on the guards and servants of the

A.D. 1478. Palazzo to defend it from assault;—conduct which was the more bold and praiseworthy in that none of those in the palace could know as yet anything of the events which had taken place in the cathedral, or how far the attempt at insurrection in the city had been successful. The men from Perugia, and the few others who had entered the palace with the Archbishop, were killed instantly by the defenders of it, who then rushed down to the gate in time to defend it successfully against others of those in the Piazza who were attempting to enter.

At that moment numbers of citizens came rushing into the Piazza with the tidings of all that had happened in the cathedral. The atrocity of the attempt, the murder which had been perpetrated, as well as the total failure of the projects of the conspirators, and the general attitude and disposition of the citizens, were at once made known to the Signory. And the Gonfaloniere Petrucci, who was the son of a counterpane maker, and had been raised from obscurity to his present position wholly by the favour of the Medici, proceeded without a moment's hesitation to show his devotion to his patrons by a yet bolder step than any which he had already taken, and one which was likely to draw after it consequences of a very serious nature.

By his own authority as chief magistrate of the Commonwealth, and without waiting for any form of trial, or allowing any moment for confession or shrift, he caused a halter to be thrown over the head of Francesco Salviati, and hung him, Archbishop as he was, from one of the windows of the Palazzo Pubblico over the Piazza!

The others of the Salviati who were with him, and Jacopo Poggio, who was very soon seized on the Piazza by the enraged citizens, were forthwith treated in the same way; and within half-an-hour from the arrival in the Piazza of the tidings of the catastrophe in the church, the

bodies of every man of those who had entered the Palace with Salviati (save one who was discovered four days afterwards more dead than alive hidden among the store of firewood) were encumbering the halls and stairs of that building; six-and-twenty corpses were lying on the stones of the Piazza, and half-a-dozen bodies were dangling from halters from the windows above. A.D. 1478.

In every part of the city all those whose position or connections could cause them to be suspected of being privy to the conspiracy, and above all the numerous members of the Pazzi family, were being hunted down, as has been said, like rats. Francesco, incapacitated by his wound from taking any measures for his safety, was found in bed in his own house, and was dragged, naked as he was, and bleeding from his wound, to the Palazzo, and there hung by the side of the Archbishop.

Giovanni, the brother of Francesco,—he who had been the victim of the injustice which deprived him of his wife's heritage, and which was one main cause of the conspiracy,—was found hiding in the garden of the monastery of Gli Angeli, and though innocent of all participation in the plot, was condemned to imprisonment for life in the tower of Volterra, and died there in 1481. In the year before his death his wife, the Borromeo heiress, whose wealth had been so fatal an inheritance, made an unsuccessful attempt to assist him in escaping from prison, and was herself consigned to imprisonment in consequence.

Guglielmo, the other brother of Francesco, who had married Bianca, sister of Lorenzo de' Medici, as has been said, was privy to the conspiracy, but had refused to take any part in its execution, preferring to await the upshot of it. When the populace were hunting down the Pazzi like vermin, he sought refuge in the house of his brother-in-law Lorenzo. His life was spared, but he was sentenced to banishment, from which he returned, and was restored to

A.D. 1478. his position and property at the time of the expulsion of the Medici.

Of the seven sons of Piero di Pazzi, Francesco's cousins, it would seem that one only, Renato certainly, and perhaps one other, Niccolò, had any knowledge of the conspiracy. Renato, when the plot was communicated to him, did all in his power to dissuade his relatives from their design. Failing in that, he left Florence and retired to the Mugello, but took no steps to prevent the conspiracy by revealing it. He seems to have been the best and most highly respected member of the family, and the morality of the times would hardly have deemed him justified in preventing the contemplated crime at the cost of betraying his relatives. He was brought in custody from the Mugello to Florence, and was hung in front of the Palazzo like his cousin.

His brother Niccolò, twenty years younger than Renato, and only sixteen at the time of the conspiracy, was with him in the Mugello, and was taken prisoner at the same time. He was condemned to perpetual imprisonment at Volterra; but lived long enough to come out of his prison, when the wheel of Fortune turned, and the Medici went down.

Andrea, Giovanni, and Galeotto, all innocent of any knowledge of the plot, were caught in attempting in various ways to escape, and were condemned to imprisonment for life.

Leonardo and Antonio, the two remaining brothers, who were both ecclesiastics, and both guiltless of all knowledge of the conspiracy, being absent from Florence at the time, escaped with sentences of perpetual exile.

Judicial sentences of death and perpetual infamy were passed against all those who had been put to death in the first fury of the people, thus assuming in the name of the Republic all responsibility for the deed.

Various other persons who had been implicated were

condemned to death, and were executed as soon as caught, A.D. 1478. —Giambatista da Montesecco among others. No pains were spared in the search for and apprehension of the criminals. The Cavaliere Jacopo, who had managed to escape out of the Porta la Croce in the first confusion, was followed and caught as he was on the point of crossing the frontier into Romagna. He was brought back to Florence and executed in front of the Palazzo. His body was buried in the chapel belonging to his family in the church of Santa Croce. But as it so chanced that there was a very heavy fall of rain immediately afterwards, the populace cried out that it was a sign of the anger of Heaven because such a wretch had been buried in holy ground. And the peasants around the city declared that their crops of grain were in imminent danger of suffering from the same sacrilege. So the body was exhumed and buried outside the city wall. But on the next day a great concourse of "children" (!) again disinterred the corpse, and proceeded to drag it through the streets of the city by the halter which yet remained around the neck. They dragged it thus to the unfortunate man's own house, and knocking there, called aloud to have the door opened to the master, who was returning home with a large retinue. At last the body was thrown into the Arno; and as it floated slowly down the stream, was followed by a jeering crowd of Florentines, who made it the butt of hideous ribaldry from the banks.

The priest of Montemuro and Antonio da Volterra, the ecclesiastical notary, who had attacked Lorenzo, but had so disastrously bungled in their undertaking, escaped from the first rush of the people against the conspirators, and found concealment in the monastery called the Badia di San Firenze. After a few days, however, they were found there, and the monastery narrowly escaped sacking at the hands of the infuriated populace in consequence. The

A.D. 1478. miserable men were dragged out, maltreated, and mutilated, and so handed over to the hangman.

Many others who were discovered or suspected to have taken some share in, or to have been cognizant of, the conspiracy were put to death. And the persevering determination which marked the efforts of the Medici to make their vengeance complete, far-famed, and exemplary, may be gathered from the fate of Bernardo Bandini. He succeeded in getting out of Florence in the first confusion that followed the attempt; and more fortunate or more active than the Cavaliere Jacopo, who was an old man, he made good his escape from Tuscany. Knowing, however, how long the arms of the Medici were, he did not think himself safe in Christendom, but pushed on till he reached the dominions of the Sultan. Then at last he thought himself secure. But he had miscalculated the power and sleuth-hound perseverance of Medicean vengeance. A cousin Medici* was sent after him, with special recommendations, such as the far-reaching ramifications of the Medicean trade enabled them to avail themselves of, to people in power among the infidels; and Bandini was brought home from Turkey to Florence, and there executed.

The terms of the many judicial sentences which the magistrates passed on several occasions, returning again and again to the matter, indicate very remarkably the solidarity which was at that day felt to unite all the members of a family so closely, as that all of them were rightly and properly responsible for the deeds of each of them. It was not in any way pretended that any of the numerous members of the Pazzi family, except those who were put to death, had any knowledge whatever of the conspiracy. Yet it was a matter of course to imprison the most pro-

* Antonio di Bernardetto de' Medici.

minent of them for life, and to banish all the others. The sentences are, in each case, pronounced against them, "*et eorum filios masculos tam natos quam nascituros*," and "*cujuslibet eorum filiorum filios.*" Nobody conceived for an instant that there was any injustice or undue severity in these condemnations. And it may indeed be said in palliation of the vindictive fury which seems to have dictated them, that the same principle of family solidarity which involved all those who shared the attainted blood in one common ruin, would have inevitably caused any one of the race who had the power to use it to the utmost for the revenge of his family against their enemies. A.D. 1478.

Such was the history of the first conspiracy against the power of the Medici,*—a part of the inauguration, it may be deemed, of their absolutism in Florence, and assuredly an attendant on their state, which never ceased to dog its steps, nor was ever very far in Florence from the despot's side.

* Angeli Poliziani Conjurationis Pactianæ anni 1478 Commentarium Neap. 1769; Conjurationis Pactianæ descriptio per Nicolaum Valorium; Breve Chronicon Caroli Petri de Johannis a Florentiola; Perbreve Chronicon Belfredelli Strinati; Sententiæ Domini Matthæi de Toscanis de Mediolano Potestatis Florentiæ anno 1477.—Excusatio Florentinorum per Dom. Bartholomæum Scalam.—All the above are printed in the same volume of the Naples edition of Poliziano's history. Ammirato, lib. xxiv. Gonf. 1120-21-22; Bruto lib. vi.; Macchiavelli, lib. viii.; Ed cit. v. ii. p. 217 *et seq.* Conjiura de' Pazzi notato di propria mano da Filippo di Matteo Strozzi, quale si trovò presente. Printed at p. 55 of a volume entitled, Vita di Filippo Strozzi il Vecchio, published by Sigg. Giuseppe Bini and Pietro Bigazzi, Florence, 1851.

BOOK VIII.

FROM THE CONSPIRACY OF THE PAZZI, A.D. 1478,

TO

THE FLIGHT OF PIETRO DE' MEDICI FROM THE CITY, A.D. 1494.

16 YEARS.

CHAPTER I.

Lorenzo de' Medici in history—The two histories of Guicciardini—Judgment of posterity on Lorenzo—Services rendered to Lorenzo by the Pazzi conspiracy—Consequences of the hanging of the Archbishop of Pisa—The anger of Pope Sixtus—He launches anathemas against Florence—Conduct of the Tuscan prelates—Excommunication hurled back by them on the Pontiff—War between the Pope and Florence—Florentine war-boards—Venice declines to assist Florence—Condition of Milan—Alfonso of Naples and Malatesta of Rimini lead troops against Florence—De Comines ambassador from France at Florence—The Pope declares that he has no quarrel with any Florentine save Lorenzo de' Medici—Conduct of Lorenzo in this conjuncture—A body-guard assigned to Lorenzo—No great result of the war—Pestilence in the camp—De Comines again in Florence—Duke of Ferrara engaged as captain-general by Florence—Lucky hour—Fantastic superstitions of the period—Duke of Ferrara has but little success—Policy of Florence at Genoa—The different parties weary of the war;—all save the Pope—Duke of Ferrara dismissed—Success of Malatesta near Perugia—Defeat of the Florentine army near Poggibonzi—Malatesta's victorious army recalled to protect Florence—Siege and capture of Colle—Discontent in Florence—Lorenzo goes himself to Naples, to obtain peace from the King—Sarzana seized by the Doge of Genoa—Reception of Lorenzo by the King of Naples—Policy of the King of Naples—Lorenzo returns to Florence with a treaty of peace—Anger of the Pope—Reputation of Lorenzo—Progress of despotism in Florence—Duke of Calabria at Siena—Providence saves Florence by allowing the Turks to seize Otranto—Peace between Florence and the Pope.

Lorenzo de' Medici was a fortunate man. The old Greek warning, as to the time when only such an assertion can be fitly made respecting any man, occurs to the mind as the statement is put forth; and the imagination hastens onwards to present a scene at the Platonic villa at pleasant Careggi, when a few years later a surer hand than

A.D. 1478. that of Francesco de' Pazzi was at the throat of the fortunate man, with intimation not to be refused, that the days of his good fortune were at an end. The picture shows an austere cowled figure standing by his bedside, and, no less inexorably than death itself, laying bare to the dying man's conscience the nature and the results of that good fortune which had made him "magnificent." Yet his magnificence, notwithstanding the solemn protest of the great friar's words, and the still more solemn protest of his own life and strangely contrasted death, has lived long after him. He has had "fame." For more than three centuries his magnificent memory has stalked through history, shining gloriously with the false brilliance cast around it, in the first instance by the hireling talents of courtier writers, and after them by the servile worshippers of what they deem to be "success," who have been contented to copy them. But that sure, though "lame-footed," Nemesis of the truth which overtook Lorenzo himself in the hour of his agonized cry to Savonarola for help in that strait where help was none, has at length overtaken his "fame" also.

There were other pens busily recording besides those of the courtier crowd. Sometimes, indeed, they were the same pens, as in the case of Guicciardini, writing at one moment the pages that were to go forth to the world, and at another the secret records, by the penning of which the statesman-historian sought to allay the stings of conscience, —records to be committed to the jealous safe-keeping of family muniment chests,—to be covered over and smothered by the dust of centuries,—but to be eventually brought to the light of a day which respects no secrets of the past. Thanks to the persevering diligence of the numerous and zealous band of Italian historical antiquaries, who have for the last twenty years been labouring with such signal success in this field, we have now the means of forming a juster estimate of Lorenzo de' Medici, and his contempo-

raries and successors, than was possible in the last generation. And thanks to the marked progress in moral sentiment which the public opinion of Europe has made within the same period, especially in matters kindred to that under our consideration, the new sources of information which have been opened to us have been studied in a different spirit, and with different results, from what they would have been at an earlier period. A.D. 1478.

Many generations more will pass before Lorenzo the Magnificent will be forgotten by history; but the time has assuredly come at last, when such "immortality" as history can award him, will not be an immortality of "magnificence."

For the present, however, we have to remember that we are in the year 1478, and to take our view from that stand-point. Lorenzo has escaped "by a miracle" from the knives of the Pazzi conspirators; and we have to look at him, with all his contemporary Europe, as a fortunate man.

A most fortunate man! What can happen to a despot usurper more fortunate than an unsuccessful conspiracy to take away his life? The priceless value of the thing is so well known, that if tyranny fails to produce a sufficiently abundant succession of real plots, the tyrant finds it desirable to invent sham ones. To Lorenzo the desperation of the Pazzi, both in what it did, and in what it failed to do, was invaluable. It enabled him utterly to crush and well-nigh exterminate a most dangerous and powerful family, the members of which were as odious as they were dangerous to him. It provided him with an assignable motive and an excuse for any amount of suspicion, watchfulness, and precaution. It lent a colouring, if not of justice, at least of such reprisals as the morality of the time considered as rightful as justice itself, to any amount of persecution with which it pleased the Medici to visit their

A.D. 1478. adversaries. It conciliated the sympathy of the lovers of law and order, and rallied to his side the partisanship of the populace; it increased his power and absolutism in the city immensely. And, lastly, and perhaps above all, while failing to harm him, it succeeded in destroying his brother.

And there is much reason to believe that this removal of a brother too near the throne was by no means unacceptable to Lorenzo. Already bickerings and jealousies had arisen between them. Already the bolder, stronger, more unscrupulous and greedier spirit of Lorenzo had found itself thwarted and encumbered by the more moderate and timid counsels of Giuliano.

Nevertheless some of the immediate results of what had taken place were of a very serious and unpleasant nature. To hang an archbishop was a very grave matter in the fifteenth century. Not only had the Archbishop of Pisa been publicly hung in the face of all Florence with every possible attendant circumstance of ignominy, but the Commonwealth had solemnly and advisedly ratified and taken on itself the responsibility of the deed. Other priests also had been ignominiously put to death, and the deed justified and approved by lay authorities,—a matter which would have of itself been amply sufficient to rouse the fury of Rome, if it had not been overshadowed by the immense enormity of the public execution of an archbishop. And if any further circumstance were needed to intensify the anger of the unforgiving Pontiff, and render his hatred against Florence and its rulers unquenchable, it was present in the fact that the Archbishop of Pisa had met his sacrilegious death while engaged in carrying into execution the cherished plans of the Holy Father himself.

Florence was not insensible to the terrible audacity of the deed she had done, though unrepentant of it. She admitted that she had fallen into "irregularity," * and

* Ammirato, lib. xxiv. Gonf. 1122.

offered the Holy Father to purge herself thereof in any way by which she might be permitted to do so. Lorenzo also sent home the young Cardinal Raffaello Riario to his relatives scatheless, having, not without difficulty, protected his life during the first outburst of the popular indignation after the deed in the cathedral. The young man was, it may be remembered, in the choir at the time, and probably was innocent of any guilty knowledge of the conspiracy, and unaware of the purposes which his presence in Florence was intended to serve. Nevertheless the closeness of the connection which was known to exist between him and those actively engaged in the execution of the plot, and the part which his visit to the city had been made to play in the matter, marked him out as a prominent object for the fury of the populace. And assuredly neither his rank nor any consideration for his cloth would have sufficed to save him, had not Lorenzo got him away to his own house, at the same time that he made his own way thither from the church. The Cardinal Raffaello had then been in some sort imprisoned, and a vast deal was made of that fact at Rome; though the Pontiff was assured that the restraint to which the sacred person of this empurpled Pisan student had been subjected was merely with a view to his own safety, and although he was not only released, but sent honourably home as soon as it was practicable to do so. A.D. 1478.

It was exasperating to the Pope to be told that there had been difficulty in preserving his grandson from the fury of the Florentine populace. He had been led to believe, and it was very necessary for the success of his ulterior schemes, that he should hope that the feeling of the citizens towards him and his race was a very different one. Then there was all the bitterness of failure. There was discredit, exposure . . . . that stupid blunderer, Montesecco, confessing all sorts of secret things before

A.D. 1478. going to the dog's death his stupidity deserved; and the Florentine Signory publishing all these damning facts with their utmost activity far and wide over Europe!

Sixtus, smarting with all these mortifications, lost not an hour in flying to arms;—to both his armouries—arms temporal and arms spiritual. The latter were the readiest to hand, and the most easily brought into action. Excommunication, interdiction, malediction of all sorts and of the utmost intensity was hurled from Rome at Florence, and at Lorenzo by name, in particular.

Under these circumstances, it is very notable to find all the Tuscan Prelates of Sees within the jurisdiction of the Republic holding a council at Florence, for the purpose of hurling back the Roman anathema, supporting and justifying the conduct of the State, and "appealing to a future Council of the Church." This was the constant and convenient form of shuffle by which rebellion against an authority officially supposed to be infallible was always justified. It had in it the special advantage of not only defying the Pope, but threatening him with that which a Pope most feared and hated of all things human or divine.

The Tuscan prelates and theologians, however, among whom are specially mentioned Bartolomeo Sozino, Francesco Aretino, Lancilotto Decio, Bulgarino, Andrea Panormita, Pier Filippo Cornio, and Gentile di Urbino, Bishop of Arezzo, under whose presidency the meeting assembled, need hardly have veiled their open rebellion against the Papal authority under any such pretence. For they went beyond any mere appeal from the Papal censures, or questioning of their justice and validity. They hurled back excommunication for excommunication!—excommunicated the Vicar of Christ, as he had excommunicated them; and printed their sentence for distribution throughout Christendom. The fact is so remarkable a one, so

startling to the notions of the Papal authority formed from the practice and feeling of Christendom in a later generation, that the existence of any such sentence, and especially of its having been printed, was subsequently called in question. But the learned and accurate antiquarian Lami has put the matter beyond a doubt.* Though he qualifies the document, which seems to have been hunted out and destroyed with all that perseverance which the Church is wont to exhibit in such matters, as "a horrid writing," as a good churchman should, it is not perhaps without a touch of Tuscan pride in the audacity with which the Tuscan episcopate reared itself against the despotism of Rome, hissing back curse for curse, that the Florentine writer asserts the certainty of its existence. "If inquiry were made in his day at Florence," he says, "for any one who had seen a printed copy of the 'Contrascomunica del clero Fiorentino † fulminata contro il Sommo Pontefice Sisto IV,' people would be surprised, and would express their belief that no such document was in existence. The fact however is most true, and there is at the present day a copy of it existing in a certain library at Florence." The worthy antiquary seems to have scruples about mentioning the exact locality, and the possession of so horrible a paper; but there can be no shadow of a doubt of the truth of his assertion. A.D. 1478.

Of course the assembly of theologians who could excommunicate a Pope, could have no difficulty in declaring his interdict void, and his censures inoperative. But it is worthy of remark,—especially when it is remembered how much effort it cost the Venetians in a subsequent century to obtain a similar result by the strained exertion of the whole power of the State—that the entire body of the

* See Lezioni di Antichità Toscana di Giovanni Lami, 2 vols. 4to. Firenze, 1766; vol. i. preface, p. cxxxv.

† He should have said, "Tuscan."

A.D. 1478. Tuscan clergy seem to have obeyed the decision of their own provincial leaders, without hesitation or trouble. The Papal interdict remained utterly inoperative in Florence. All the rites of religion were performed absolutely as usual. The bells were rung; the masses were said; penitents were shriven, and the dead buried in every respect as if no interdict of all these things had been pronounced at Rome. And doubtless many a pious Florentine citizen never heard anything about the interdict at all. And Venice, it must be remembered, was struggling against Pope Paul in the seventeenth century for all that was most valuable to her, and almost for her existence; whereas Florence might at once have reconciled herself with Pope Sixtus by banishing her Medici.

The Tuscan prelates, "citizens before they were priests," stood by the Commonwealth, and by the Medici, on the opening of whose hand all things living in Tuscany were filled with plenteousness. And the attitude assumed by them might have sufficed to make Florence and her rulers feel very comfortably indifferent to all the spiritual artillery in the Papal armoury. But Sixtus had merely launched excommunication and interdict, because it was just as easy to do so as not. It cost nothing, and might possibly injure the enemy in some way. But with Sixtus the arm of flesh was the main point. And in this respect the Pontiff was better prepared than his adversary.

He had Ferdinand King of Naples for his ally, and Count Frederick of Urbino for his general.* And he lost no time in loosing these dogs of war against the Florentines. The latter were no less active on their side in

* Guicciardini, in that extremely valuable and interesting work which has just been published for the first time, among the other unpublished writings of the great Florentine statesman, by Signor Canestrini, (vol. iii. delle opere inedite di F. Guicciardini)—Guicciardini asserts, that both these potentates, the King of Naples and the Duke of Urbino, were accomplices in the conspiracy against the Medici.—Opere ined. di F. Guic. vol. iii. p. 37.

preparing means of defence against an attack which they well knew was coming. On the 13th of June, they created a "Dieci di Guerra,"—a board of Ten as usual for the management of the coming war, who entered energetically on that part of the duties of their office, which the Florentine War boards always performed as efficiently, as they did mischievously and inefficiently that other portion which consisted in directing the military operations of the war. In actively seeking alliances, in perseveringly and skilfully intriguing to stir up enmities against their enemies, in making it appear to others that the interests of Florence were their own, and in spending the money of the Commonwealth with an audacious profusion on all sides in the hiring of men and captains, and the purchase of war material, the Florentine War Boards were matchless. A.D. 1478.

Ambassadors were on this occasion sent off to all the sovereigns and States of Christendom, to set forth the griefs of Florence against the Pontiff, and to call Heaven to witness the justice of their cause against a neighbouring sovereign, and him a Vicar of Christ, who suborned assassins to murder their citizens while saying their prayers! Specially ambassadors were sent to Milan and to Venice, both of which were then bound to Florence by league offensive and defensive, to demand the aid of those states by virtue of the existing conventions. The Duke of Milan sent assistance; but Venice shuffled. She admitted her obligation to march to the assistance of Florence in any public quarrel; but this matter was a *private* quarrel, the Senate said, between the Pope and Lorenzo de' Medici, in which she, Venice, was not bound to take any part. Messer Tommaso Solderini was despatched, to endeavour to bring the Venetian Senate "to a sounder mind;" * and in the meantime the Ten busily attended to the hiring of

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 217.

A.D. 1478. troops. Niccolò Orsini, Count of Pitigliano, Gabriello and Leonardo Malespini, Ridolfo Gonzaga, the brothers of the Marchese Frederigo of Mantua, with his two sons, Francesco and Guasparre, Conrado Orsini, and other captains of note, were engaged. Masses of infantry were collected, and horses bought throughout Lombardy and in other countries, "without any regard to expense," says Ammirato. They sent ambassadors to the King of France, and strove to persuade Milan and Venice to do likewise, with a view to inducing that monarch, not only to break off all diplomatic intercourse with the Pontiff, but to withdraw from Rome all such prelates and clerks as were French subjects; in order to see if that might avail, says Ammirato, "to change the Pope's mind."

Milan was not in a condition to afford much assistance to Florence in her present need. The reigning Duke Giovanni Galeazzo, who was only seven years old when he received the oath of allegiance from the Milanese after the murder of his father in 1476, was under the tutelage of his mother, who was struggling failingly to maintain her own and her son's authority against the encroachments of his uncles, and especially of his uncle Ludovico, nicknamed "Il Moro;" while they themselves had enough to do to keep the various dependencies of the duchy, and especially Genoa, in subjection. Not only could little help be expected under these circumstances from Milan, but the known weakness of that government gave occasion to the first incident of the war. For the King of Naples, knowing the disaffection which existed at Genoa, and the difficulty with which the Milanese government maintained their supremacy in that city, despatched Ludovico Fregoso, the Doge who had been exiled from Genoa at the time of the Milanese usurpation, with a force of troops to Piombino, whence he might by means of his adherents and friends in Genoa make an attempt at bringing about a revolution

there, and wresting it from the Sforza dominion. In order to meet this danger, Florence sent a strong force under the brothers Mallespini to Sarzana, to prevent any attempt of the kind. A.D. 1478.

But it very soon became evident that the enemy was not going to let the grass grow under his feet. Sixtus IV. indeed was not the man to do so, when the gratification of his anger was concerned. A messenger reached Florence in the first days of July, with tidings that Alfonso, Duke of Calabria, the son of the King of Naples, was marching northwards, with twelve squadrons of cavalry and five hundred infantry, and had already reached Panicale, a place not far from the Florentine frontier in the direction of Perugia. And at the back of this bringer of ill news came another, telling that the Count of Urbino, with a force of some twenty squadrons of cavalry,—what with his own troopers and those of Robert Malatesta, lord of Rimini, and Costanzo Sforza, lord of Pesaro, who had both been hired for the war by the Pope,—had reached Pianello on the eastern frontier. It was clear that the Ten would do well to bestir themselves.

Jacopo Guicciardini was appointed Commissary for the conduct of the war, and despatched with all the forces that could be mustered in the direction of Arezzo. The Venetians, having apparently thought better of their ungenerous equivocation, had sent assistance under Galeotto Pico, lord of Mirandola, and Giorgio Antonio Scaritto. Some Milanese troops had also arrived under Giorgio Jacopo Trivulzio and Alberto Visconti. Every day bodies of troops under various leaders, hired by Florence, were arriving in the city, and were despatched to join the army as fast as they arrived.

Meantime the Sieur d'Argenton—Philippe de Comines—reached Florence as ambassador from the King of France, promising that his master, in conjunction with the other sovereigns, would threaten the Pope "with their disobe-

A.D. 1478. dience" in case he should persist in his present line of conduct, as well as that France should lend her arms for the purpose of restoring peace to Italy.* There never indeed was a time when France was not ready to march into Italy for the realization of any idea that could be made into a pretext for her armed presence there. But it has hardly been seen, either in ancient or modern times, that her interposition has had the result of restoring peace to Italy.

No Captain-General of the Florentine army had yet been appointed, because it was hoped that the Duke of Ferrara might accept that position. But it was very necessary that no more time should be lost. For on the 11th of July the main body of the enemy's troops advanced to the bottom of the steep hill on which Montepulciano is situated, within two miles of the walls of that city, which now formed a portion of Florentine territory. And much about the same time that this news reached Florence, on the 13th of July, "a trumpet" from the Duke of Calabria came into the city, bringing a brief from the Pope, by which it was formally notified to Florence that the Holy Father, not being able any longer to endure the manifold injuries which the Holy See had on various occasions received from Lorenzo de' Medici, he was compelled to take up arms against the Commonwealth, to the end that when it should have been liberated from the yoke of that tyrant, he might be able, in alliance with Florence and the other Princes and Republics of Christendom, to turn all his efforts to the war against the Infidels. All that the Pontiff asked from Florence, he said, was the expulsion of the Medici. And he must consider those who were opposed to that expulsion as enemies to religion and to Christendom. And if the Commonwealth should be so mad and blind to

* Ammirato, Gonf. 1123.

its own welfare as to persist in submitting itself to so vile a tyranny, he, the Holy Father, could see no better way of serving the interests of the Christian world than making war against it. The Holy See had no enemy in Florence, the brief repeated in conclusion, save Lorenzo de' Medici. And it was for the Commonwealth to consider whether, for his sole interest and advantage, it was disposed to incur all the certain evils, and face all the perils, which a persistence in its present course involved. A.D. 1478.

The step thus taken by Sixtus was cunningly enough calculated to accomplish the ruin of his enemy. It was a clever move; but it would have had a much better chance of succeeding if it had been tried before, and not after, an attempt to assassinate the object of it. Sixtus should have declared war on the ground of the assistance rendered by Lorenzo to Niccolò Vitelli at Città di Castello, or on any other of the many pretexts that were open to him; and should then have put the city under interdict, declaring at the same time that the Holy See had no quarrel save with the Medici, and that he was ready to make peace with Florence as soon as ever they were got rid of. Then he would have had all the strength of the Pazzi and the Salviati to assist him in bringing the Commonwealth to feel that Lorenzo was as Jonah in the ship of Tarshish. As it was, he had roused a sentiment of indignation throughout Europe against himself, and had strengthened the Medici by all the force of the sympathy which the half successful enterprise of murdering them had evoked in their favour. Now it was that Lorenzo felt how valuable the conspiracy had been to him. Still it could not be but that the position in which Sixtus had placed him was a more or less dangerous one. Florence had been and was still very desirous of remaining at peace. The unwonted tranquillity which she had been of late enjoying had taught her to appreciate the value of it. Now she was threatened with a

A.D. 1478. dangerous and expensive war, which could be avoided at the cost of casting out from her a family which was, as every Florentine well knew, successfully doing that which it had ever been the primary and paramount object of the Commonwealth to prevent its citizens from accomplishing. It cannot be supposed either that the Papal interdict and excommunication went absolutely for nothing in the minds of that Catholic population. And this fear, too, might be removed, and all made well, by the sacrifice of the same obnoxious man.

Lorenzo must have felt, when the Pope's brief was publicly read before the Signory, that the moment was a critical one for him. "He judged it to be necessary," we are told by Ammirato, "to speak to the people." He therefore, the historian goes on to say, assembled a large number of citizens in the palace, and there addressed them. The substance of his oration has been preserved; but had it not been so, we could have had but little difficulty in guessing what must have been the subject-matter of his speech. If it was thought that the Republic could be served by his exile or death, he was perfectly ready to suffer in any way that might be prescribed to him. The Commonwealth had again and again thought proper to preserve to them the lives, property, and honour of his grandfather, his father, and himself;—if the citizens now thought differently, they had only to say so. He did not wish to make any remark on the recent events, (the conspiracy,) for the Florentines had already sufficiently declared their feeling upon the subject. But he must say that it grieved him to the bottom of his heart to see a Vicar of Christ behaving as Sixtus was doing, and condescending to persecute a private citizen; and, for the sake of such an object, to make fierce war on a neighbouring state. He had good hope, however, that by God's help and that of their own prudence and industry, the Republic

would soon see an end of its present troubles. But meantime, he again said, if it was thought that the best way out of these troubles lay through his exile or death, they had only to say so, &c., &c. A.D. 1478.

It was replied to Lorenzo "in few words," we are told, "by him who was elected to this office, that it behoved him to unite his fortunes for life and for death with those of the Republic." *

Of course! But it would have been more interesting to have told us what means were used for the selection of those citizens who were assembled on this occasion in the Palazzo Pubblico, and how the "election" of the spokesman who was to reply in the name of those present was made. There were still men in Florence to whom it was gall and wormwood to see the Commonwealth falling from day to day more completely into the condition of a despotism; and there were many more who bore no such love to the Medici as to wish that the State should be exposed for their sakes to all the evils of a ruinous war. There were also religious men to whom the censures and curses of the Church were a dreadful infliction. But we can hardly suppose that any of these classes of the citizens found their way into the Palazzo Pubblico on the occasion of that meeting, and still less that they had any voice in the election of that spokesman who was to wrap up in so few words all that Lorenzo wished to hear on the subject proposed for their consideration.

"The sense of the city," however, having been thus ascertained, a body guard of twelve men was assigned to Lorenzo for the special protection of his person. And thus the principal of the outward and visible trappings of the state of royalty was attained, and Lorenzo the Magnificent and the Fortunate felt himself more a king than ever.

* Ammirato, Gonf. 1123.

A.D. 1478. Meantime, though the united armies of the Pope and the King of Naples were nearly half as large again as those of the Republic, the war was carried on in the southern part of Tuscany without any great battle, or any result, except, as usual, the destruction and desolation of the country and its inhabitants. It was observed however that the war was worse in this respect than former wars had been known to be in Italy.* Cruelty and outrage were more common. Besides the burning and plundering, which was the regular and normal thing, even children were ill-treated and carried off as prisoners. As the autumn advanced these sufferings were increased, and the workers of them made to take their share of the evil of the times by the appearance of impartial pestilence, which caused many more deaths, both among the people and in the ranks of the army, than the war did.

On the 27th of August, Messer Philippe de Comines again arrived in Florence with letters from the French king, promising to send five hundred lances to the assistance of the Republic under the significant leadership of the son of Charles of Anjou, the pretender to the throne of Naples. It was expected that these French troops might arrive about the middle of September. And the news was so acceptable to the Florentines, that the city presented to Messer Philippe on his departure, a table-service of fifty-five pounds weight of wrought silver.

Other good news came too at the same time from Ferrara, whence the ambassador, who had been sent with ten thousand crowns in his hand to hire the Duke as captain-general of the Florentine forces, wrote that just as he had given up all hope of being able to succeed in his mission, the Duke had at last consented to take service with the Republic, and had promised to start on his way

* Ammirato, Gonf. 1123.

to the camp on the 30th of that month. His Excellency was pleased to say that he would leave the little matter of pay to the generosity of the Florentines. Of course the citizens knew what that meant; and were liberal in their terms accordingly. The Duke reached Florence on the 8th of September, with two hundred and fifty cavalry, and two hundred infantry, and on the 12th passed on to the camp. A.D. 1478.

The stars were consulted as usual for information as to the fortunate moment for consigning the bâton of command to the new general; and Ammirato, in recording the fact, says that he should not have dared to write such an absurdity, if he had not found it indisputably stated in the books of the Ten of War. The bâton was to be handed to the general by Lorenzo de' Medici; and the Ten write to him to be quite sure to do so immediately after the 16th hour on the 27th; for that then everything would go well; but that if it were done a minute sooner the greatest dangers were to be expected. But what is remarkable in the matter is that Ammirato, who had recorded the same thing without observation on previous occasions, should testify such strong surprise at the same superstition in this case. It must be concluded that he, writing an hundred years or so afterwards, in the reign of the Grand Duke Cosmo I., supposed that such a progress in intelligence and education had been made in the time of Lorenzo, as would have caused the existence of any such superstitious belief to be impossible in his day. Yet we know that, on the contrary, there never was a period in the history of mankind, when the human intellect was more grossly fooled by strange and absurd beliefs of all sorts, than in the polished age and country of Lorenzo de' Medici.

The new enthusiasm for the cultivation of the ancient learning and literature, especially for the study of Aristotle and Plato, had not only done nothing towards teaching the

A.D. 1478. disciples of those philosophers the due relation between facts and theories, but had filled the minds of men with a whole world of baseless fancies more fantastic than, in Italy at least, had ever been the case before. Speculative systems based on the cosmogenetic theories of Plato and of Aristotle, over the diversities of which the great scholars of the day wrangled with insane fury, like George of Trebizond, Theodore Gaza, George Gemistus and George Scolarius, or strove to conciliate them, like Bessarion and Marsilius Ficinus, had abused the minds of a generation eager for any new form of belief, with a crop of absurdities as gross as any that the darkest ignorance could have produced. Ficinus in his neo-Platonism found an authorisation and justification for the silliest fancies of his contemporaries. The influence not only of the stars but of herbs and stones, on the character and destinies of men, was deduced thence and taught by him. He always carried a varied supply of amulets himself, and discourses at learned length on the occult virtues of the agate and topaz, the tooth of the viper, or lion's claws. Alchemy, astrology, and all the occult sciences, that is to say, the sciences based on fancy instead of facts, were in vogue. The cautious cynic Macchiavelli thought that "the air was full of spirits, which by sinister auguries warn men of the evils which threaten them." And at a still later day, Guicciardini, the sceptic historian, declared that "the spirits of the air, those, that is to say, which familiarly speak to men, do really exist; for I have seen such evidence of the fact, that it appears to me most certain."

The minds of men were led to seek blindly for some new forms of belief by a profound dissatisfaction with the old forms in which they had hitherto dwelt. Many men spoke of coming changes in religion and faith. George Gemistus, the chief supporter and teacher of the neo-Platonic philosophy, which was cultivated in the celebrated

Medicean academy, expected and hoped for the repristination of the pagan gods. Landinus cast the horoscope of religion; and concluded from it that a great reform in Christianity would be effected on the 5th of November, 1484;—a month in which, singular as it may seem to some minds, Luther was born.* A.D. 1478.

But to those who have observed the set of the currents in the prevailing forms of human thought, it will not seem strange, that a period in which a great mental activity busying itself about words to the exclusion of any experimental study of things, was coincident with a condition of great and universal moral relaxation, and a dying out of all faith in the old forms of belief, should have been also a time of fantastic superstition and of that credulity which is the mere running hither and thither of minds unfurnished with any real grounds of belief in anything.†

Notwithstanding the accurate observance of the fortunate hour indicated by the stars for the investing of the Duke of Ferrara with the symbol of his authority, the stars did not keep their promises, and the Duke did little to satisfy his employers, or earn his very handsome wages. The war continued during the remaining months of the year, spreading itself in a desultory manner over a larger space of country, and involving fresh districts—the country around Pisa among others—in its destructive ravages. In fact, the contest, which seems to have degenerated into a mere guerilla warfare, was raging on so many points at once of the territory of the Republic or of its allies, that the Ten of War were sorely puzzled how to multiply the forces at their command, sufficiently to meet all the different calls upon them. Siena had as usual seized the opportunity of showing itself openly hostile to Florence.

* If 1484, and not 1483, as some think, was the date of his birth.

† See the fourth chapter of "La Storia di Girolamo Savonarola, narrata da Pasquale Villari. Firenze, 1859."

A.D. 1478. Pisa had to be protected. Lucca, though it had not ventured to declare itself against the Republic, was so well known to be animated by sentiments of ill-will, and so strongly suspected of being on the point of manifesting them openly, that it required the most careful watching; and Piero Capponi was sent thither to keep a careful eye on every movement of the little city;—a duty which on several occasions during his stay exposed his life to imminent danger from the unconcealed animosity of the Lucchese populace. Genoa had at the same time to be assisted in its efforts to establish its independence under its old Doge Fregoso, not because Florence was at all desirous of aiding that city in rebellion against the infant Duke of Milan and his mother, who continued to be the close friends and allies of the Commonwealth; but because that was the only means of preventing Genoa from falling into the hands of the King of Naples. This course of conduct had to be justified to the Duchess Bona, and the government of her son, who, sorely troubled by the rebellion and intrigues of her brothers-in-law, was too weak to maintain her authority in Genoa. The Duchess was obliged to admit the necessity of the case; and did so by herself making peace with the restored Doge on the condition that he should drive out from Genoa all the partisans of the Neapolitan king.

It was throughout all the north of Italy a dreary and confused scene of resultless and almost purposeless warfare, the details of which in the copious pages of the historians are inexpressibly fatiguing and uninteresting. Even the actors in these scenes of disheartening and humiliating desolation and misery,—or at least those who had to pay the actors in them for their work,—seem to have become weary of the wretched business in which they were engaged. All save the Vicar of Christ, that is to say, were weary of useless warfare and slaughter, of the burning of

crops, the destruction of villages, the harrying of homesteads, the outraging of women. But Sixtus had not had enough of any of these things. His voice *orbi et urbi* was still for war! A.D. 1479.

In the first days of 1479 came to Florence ambassadors from the court of France on their way to Rome with propositions for peace. Two days after them ambassadors from the Emperor bound on the same Christian errand to the Father of the Faithful arrived in the city. And both parties urged the Florentines to send envoys with them to Rome, encouraging them to hope that such a general cry for peace would not fail to move the Holy Father. The Florentines, who were nearer neighbours to Sixtus and fancied they knew him better, had small hope that any such application would be of any avail. Nevertheless, in order, they said, that it might not be supposed or asserted that they were not desirous of peace, they would not refuse to send an embassy as proposed, and join their voice to those of France and the Empire. The united embassies went to Rome accordingly. But the fierce old Franciscan mendicant on the throne of St. Peter was immovable. And the ambassadors returned, as the Florentines had fully expected, without having accomplished anything.*

Shortly afterwards the Florentines recalled the commission granted to the Duke of Ferrara, and appointed Roberto di Malatesta their General-in-chief, not however discharging the former from their service, but retaining him as commander of one of the armies they kept in the field. Throughout this war, however, the Florentines had little cause to be contented with the illustrious captain, whose high rank had to be paid for at such an exorbitant rate. In the first days of April, 1479, the shifting current of the war having brought the armies into the immediate

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 240; Ammirato, lib. xxiv. Gonf. 1126.

A.D. 1479. vicinity of each other near the banks of the Serchio, the enemy having been previously burning and destroying all the district around, crossed that river on the approach of the Florentine army under the Duke, and were allowed by him to escape unpursued. The Ten, we are told, were "greatly disturbed"* when these tidings reached them, and the populace much more violently so, insomuch that the outcry of the popular indignation reached the ears of the Duke himself. Whereupon he "made very serious complaints" to the Ten, representing that his business was to conduct the affairs of the war according to the rules of military science, and not with reference to the notions of an ignorant populace. It was the very decided opinion of the Ten, that with the three thousand infantry in excellent condition, and five hundred lances, which the Duke had at his disposition, he ought not to have hesitated to pursue the enemy. Nevertheless, in reply to his haughty complaints with respect to the indignation of the citizens, the Ten contented themselves with begging him to pay no attention to the noise made by an ignorant mob, gently hinting at the same time that "the best way to make them ashamed of themselves would be to achieve some signal success."

But this success was not forthcoming. A few months later, in the beginning of September, one of the two armies into which the Florentines had divided their forces was at Poggibonsi under the Duke of Ferrara, and Gonzaga, the Marquis of Mantua. The other, under Malatesta of Rimini, had just defeated the Papal troops on the banks of the lake of Perugia, exactly on the ground, says Macchiavelli, where Hannibal defeated the Romans. And Florence was rejoicing over the first notable success of the war, when news came from the other army at Poggibonsi

* Ammirato, lib. xxiv. Gonf. 1127.

which turned all the rejoicing into lamentation and almost into despair. A.D. 1479.

The troops under the Duke of Ferrara and Gonzaga had been making incursions into the territory of Siena,—the only species of warfare in which those hireling armies were never sluggish or inactive,—and had taken a considerable quantity of booty. But unhappily the two noble commanders fell out over the division of their plunder, and totally forgetful of the interests of their employers, came to blows with each other on this ignoble subject of dispute. Of course the disorder in the camp was extreme, and it became evident to the Ten that it was impossible for their two noble captains to act together any longer. So the Duke of Ferrara was "permitted" to return home with his own personal following.

It was not the first time by many that trouble and disaster had arisen in the Florentine armies from the incompatible pretensions of rival princes in the pay of the Republic. But Florence failed to acquire any wisdom from her experience in this respect. Her only notion, when danger threatened, and it was required that the Commonwealth should put out all her strength, was to spend her money profusely. The Florentines seem to have thought that if one prince could not win their battles for them, all that was needed was to hire a second—a third—a fourth;—to shovel out the florins with sufficient liberality, and hire as much valour and generalship as the occasion might require. But the citizens ought to have learned by this time that it was easy to have too much of a good thing in the matter of princely hirelings.

On the present occasion the quarrel bteween the Duke of Ferrara and the Marquis of Mantua over their plunder left the army in such a condition of demoralization and absence of all soldierly discipline, that nothing but an attack was needed to ensure a disgraceful catastrophe. In

A.D. 1479. this state of things the son of the King of Naples, who was in the neighbouring district of Siena, "took courage," as Macchiavelli says, to come and look after the Florentine army; and here is the result, in the words of the indignant historian.* "And so, as quick as thought, the Florentine army, as soon as it saw itself assailed, not trusting to its arms nor to its numbers, which were superior to those of the enemy, nor to the remarkable strength of the position in which it was posted, without waiting even to see the enemy, but at the first sight of the dust he made, turned and fled, and left to the conquerors their stores of munition, their artillery, and their baggage waggons. So great indeed was the poltroonery and indiscipline in the armies of that time," continues the indignant Secretary, "that the turning of a horse's head or his tail was enough to decide the winning or loss of a battle!"

This disgraceful defeat inflicted far more than enough of evil on the Commonwealth to counterbalance the advantage gained by Malatesta on the shore of the Perugian lake. There had been a good deal of pestilence that autumn in Florence, and most of those who were able to leave the city had sought refuge in their villas. But now all those who had their properties and houses in the Valdelsa and Valdepesa hurried back to the city with their families and their goods, driven by a more urgent fear than that of the pestilence. For those rich and fertile valleys were left by the late defeat and the dispersion of the army wholly undefended, and open to the plundering forays of the enemy. There was fear in the city lest the Duke of Calabria and his troops, emboldened by their easy and bloodless victory,

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 244. Macchiavelli is accused, as has been seen, of too violent a prejudice against and depreciation of the mercenary armies of this period; but on this occasion his account is fully confirmed by Ammirato, who elsewhere finds fault with his reports of the doings of the mercenary troops.—Ammirato, lib. xxiv. Conf. 1130.

might even march on Florence itself. And the government recalled in haste the victorious army which had been so successful under Malatesta, for the protection of the city. It was felt to be a very sad necessity to be obliged to take this step; for it was cutting short a career of victory. Malatesta had been as successful as the Duke of Ferrara and Gonzaga had been the reverse. Already he had pressed Perugia so hard that it was expected from day to day to fall into his hands; and that would have been a success far greater than any that had yet marked the progress of this useless war on either side. It was a great pity; but there was no help for it; for, as Macchiavelli says, "the Florentines preferred defending their own city to offending that of their neighbours." The army was brought accordingly to San Casciano, a little upland town upon the open hills about eight miles to the south of the city, a situation well adapted to be a point of observation for the protection of Florence. A.D. 1479.

But the result of this measure was that the whole country was left absolutely at the mercy of the two armies of the enemy, both that which had been victorious at Poggibonzi, and that which had been defeated on the banks of the lake of Perugia. The former ravaged unchecked all the Valdepesa and Valdelsa, took possession of Poggibonzi and Vico, sacked and burned Certaldo, (the high-perched little hill town, with its picturesque remains of crumbling red brick walls, which is pointed out to travellers on their way from Florence to Siena, from the railway station at the foot of the hill, as the birth-place and death-place of Boccaccio, whose house, still marked by the little tower distinctive of the residence of a noble, may be seen existing to the present day in the same condition as when he lived in it;)—and then laid siege to Colle. The latter army overran at their pleasure the districts of Arezzo and Cortona, plundering the whole country of

A.D. 1479. everything portable; and carrying off as prisoners the wretched inhabitants.

The little walled city of Colle, situated among the Chianti hills in the upper part of the fertile valley of the Elsa, shut its gates against the invader, and with great bravery and loyalty to the cause of Florence sustained a long siege. An attempt was made by the Florentine army to raise the siege; but it was ineffectual; and Colle, despite the constancy and patiently-borne sufferings of its men, and even its women (for they are recorded to have taken part in its defence), fell into the hands of the enemy* on the 14th of November, 1479, after having repulsed no less than four assaults.

On all sides the prospect was black and discouraging enough for the Florentines, and they were glad enough to accept proposals for a truce brought to Florence on the 24th November, by a herald of the Duke of Calabria, in consequence of the urgent interposition of the King of France. Florence wished to bargain for a ten days' notice of the ending of the truce; but the Duke of Calabria would consent to give them five only.

Meantime discontent had been spreading dangerously within the city. "What was worst of all," says Ammirato, summing up the detail of the unfortunate circumstances in which the Florentines were placed, "there were those in Florence who began to murmur, saying that the Republic ought not to be utterly ruined for the sake of one single citizen."

"Just as wounds," says Macchiavelli, "are more painfully felt when the blood has had time to cool, than when they are received in the heat of the combat, so the short repose of this truce allowed the Florentines to feel in their fullness all the evils that had fallen on them." Accusations

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 245; Ammirato, lib. xxiv. Gonf. 1131.

and recriminations flew thickly about among the citizens. A.D 1479. Words ran high both in the council chambers of the Palazzo and in the Loggie and private meetings of the citizens. On one of the former occasions, "a certain citizen was daring enough to turn to Lorenzo de' Medici, and say to him, 'This city is weary, and will have no more war. It is necessary, therefore, to think of the means of restoring peace.'"

To think of the audacity of speaking in that way to Lorenzo de' Medici! And Macchiavelli records the "daring" of the councillor who ventured to say so much, without a syllable of remark or surprise at the fact of its having been considered daring so to speak.

Lorenzo, however, felt that there was a warning in such portentous circumstances which was not to be neglected; and he determined on taking advantage of the truce to obtain peace if possible. There appeared to be two modes by which this object might be obtained;—either by making a separate peace with the King of Naples to the exclusion of the Pope, or with the latter to the exclusion of the King of Naples; and Lorenzo, says Macchiavelli, called a private meeting of his most trusted friends* to decide this point. They examined the matter well, the Secretary tells us, and preferred the alliance of the King. The reasons which decided them in their preference are worth being given in the Secretary's own words.

"They preferred the friendship of the King," he says, "as being more stable and secure, because of the shortness of the lives of the Popes, the variable nature of the succession, the little fear the Church has of temporal princes, and the small regard she has for any considerations in taking

* "Si ristrinse con quelli amici che pensava più fedeli e più savi." A very different thing from assembling a public meeting at the Palazzo, and making a set speech, as Ammirato, in contradiction to all probability, represents him to have done.

A.D. 1479. her own line of conduct. The consequence of this is, that a secular government cannot place entire confidence in a Pope, or join its fortunes to his with safety. For he who in times of war and danger is the friend of the Pope will have the Holy Father at his side in his victories, but will be alone in his defeats."

It was decided, therefore, that an attempt should be made to conclude a peace with the King of Naples separately; and Lorenzo determined to go himself to Naples on the errand. Ammirato puts a long rhetorical speech into his mouth, supposed to be spoken in a public meeting at the Palazzo della Signoria, in which he tells the Florentines that he cannot any longer take advantage of that unparalleled generosity which preferred war with the Pope to giving him up; and that he has determined, therefore, on giving himself up into the hands of the enemies; but nevertheless hopes that he may come back to them alive. There is no reason to believe that Lorenzo ever tried the gravity of a meeting of Florentines by treating them with any such rhodomontade; but it may indeed have been true that one of the reasons in favour of treating with the King instead of with the Pope, was the very great danger to his life which Lorenzo would have really incurred in trusting himself into the hands of Sixtus IV.

Macchiavelli's account of the matter is by far the more probable one, and affords a specimen of the degree in which Lorenzo was already acting after the manner of an absolute sovereign, and of the part the Signory had to perform in the government of the city. Lorenzo having finally made up his mind, he says, to take this journey, commended the care of the city and the government to Tommaso Soderini, who was then Gonfaloniere, and started in the first days (it was on the 5th) of December. "And when he had reached Pisa, he wrote back to the Signory, telling them the cause of his departure. And the Signory,

to show him honour, and in order that he might treat with the King for peace with more credit, appointed him ambassador for the people of Florence, and gave him authority to make any conditions of alliance with the King he thought best for the advantage of the Republic." A.D. 1480.

Poor Signory! Surely, surely if never before, those successors of all the great old names of the Republic, sitting there in the same council chamber from which those fathers of the State had ruled the destinies of half Italy, must have felt themselves to be a farce and a sham when they passed these ordinances. They are not even bidden to authorize the aristocrat's going by appointing him ambassador before he starts,—not even told that he is going! He writes back to say that he is off; and then they hasten, unasked, to appoint him ambassador for the look of the thing. Certainly the Florentine Signory had fallen far in a short time.

Shortly after the departure of Lorenzo a circumstance occurred which, while it disastrously influenced the state of matters at home, by giving rise to enmity between the Commonwealth and Genoa, caused yet greater disquietude at Florence by the suspicions it generated that the King of Naples was not disposed to act loyally in his dealings with the Republic. This was the sudden surprisal and seizure of Sarzana by Fregoso, the restored Doge of Genoa, who succeeded in making himself master of the town, and throwing into prison the Florentine citizen who was residing there as governor. The Duke of Calabria, who remained during the truce at Siena, on being applied to on the subject by the Signory, declared in the most positive manner, both by letters and by envoys sent expressly to Florence, that neither he nor the King his father had in anywise authorised or been privy to the enterprise of Fregoso.

Nevertheless there was great uneasiness at Florence, and

A.D. 1480. the political horizon on all sides seemed very dark. "The Florentines," says Macchiavelli, "considered themselves in as bad a condition as they well could be, seeing that the coffers of the State were empty, the *head of the Republic* in the hands of the King, that they had an old war on their hands with the Pope and the King, and now a new one with Genoa also; and with all this, that they were without friends. For they hoped little from the Venetians, and feared rather than hoped anything from the government of Milan, seeing that it was unstable* and liable to change. The only hope was in the negotiations in which Lorenzo was engaged with the King of Naples."

The King received the Florentine "private citizen" with all possible honour and courtesy. He had looked forward to his coming with no little interest and curiosity, having formed a high estimate of the man for the sake of crushing whom, says Macchiavelli, all Italy had been overrun by war. "For the greatness of the enmities he had inspired," as the Florentine Tacitus characteristically writes, "had made him a very great man." His Majesty was, the Florentine historians assure us, astonished, when he came to talk with Lorenzo, at the large and accurate knowledge he possessed of the whole political condition of Italy, at the statesman-like shrewdness and masterly comprehensiveness of his views, the soundness of his appreciation of the characters of the different princes and rulers as well as of the peoples of Italy, and the clearness of his exposition of what there was to be hoped from peace and to be feared from war. And he began to be persuaded that it was better to have this Florentine citizen for his friend than for his enemy.

Nevertheless, temptations were not wanting to lead him

* In consequence of the character and conduct of the young Duke's usurping uncle, Ludovico il Moro, with whom the Duchess Bona had very unadvisedly just made peace, and permitted him to return to Milan.

to try the chances of a different game. These temptations were not sufficiently strong to induce him to break off negotiations with Lorenzo, or to allow any symptoms of a disposition to behave treacherously to his guest to be discoverable in the treatment of him at his court. But they were sufficient to make him hesitate and delay the conclusion of any definitive arrangement. For the King knew that there were malcontents in Florence who would have been well pleased that Lorenzo should never be allowed to return from Naples. It had been openly said in Florence that if Lorenzo remained long absent, it was not improbable that the Commonwealth might pass through one of those sudden revolutions the secret of making which was so well understood there, and that Lorenzo, if he did not come back quickly, might find the gates of the city shut against him. And the echo of these murmured menaces had reached the ears of the King, and he was tempted at least to allow the citizens the time that might be needed for bringing about such a catastrophe, if they were minded to do so. With this view he made delays on various pretences, and continued to detain Lorenzo at Naples for more than two months. A.D. 1480.

But no revolution broke out in Florence; all remained quiet there; and on the 6th of March, 1480, the King at length allowed his guest to depart, loaded with honours and compliments of all sorts, and . . . with a duly ratified treaty of alliance offensive and defensive between Florence and Naples. It was also provided by the articles of the treaty that the Pazzi imprisoned in the tower of Volterra should be liberated, and that Florence should take the Duke of Calabria into her service at a handsome yearly stipend. The first of these conditions was no doubt intended as a sop to the Pope, which, however, by no means served the purpose for which it was intended: the other was a matter of course. Florence always, in all circum-

A.D. 1480. stances of her dealings with Emperors, Popes, or Princes, had to pay.

The anger of Pope Sixtus, when the tidings of the peace and alliance thus made between his ally and his hated enemy reached him, was, as may easily be supposed, intense. Nor were the Venetians much better pleased with the conduct of Florence, considering themselves to have been thrown over by the conclusion of a peace without any reference to them.

It began to be seen in Florence soon after Lorenzo's return, that the peace thus made would in all probability lead to a new and perhaps more dangerous war than the last. And this danger was made to serve as a pretext for advancing yet another step in the progress towards absolute government. The increase of reputation which Lorenzo had acquired by his successful journey to Naples, was very marked, not only in Florence, but throughout Italy. Everywhere statesmen magnified his judgment, his dexterity, and the authority by which he had succeeded in obtaining a peace of which there had seemed to be little or no hope. Other men—not the statesmen, I think—spoke in enthusiastic terms of the ardent and self-devoting patriotism which had induced him to incur the risk of trusting his life in the hands of the enemy. There were some, however, who, "looking more nearly into these matters," says Ammirato, were inclined to think that Lorenzo had been induced to face this danger, if danger there were, not so much for the sake of his country as for the increase and preservation of his own authority over that country. And these *frondeurs* deemed their view of the matter fully justified by Lorenzo's conduct on his return. "Taking private counsel with the chiefs of the city," says Ammirato,* "he obtained that a *Balia* should

* Lib. xxiv. Gonf. 1134.

be taken." Observe the progress indicated by the phrase. A.D. 1480.
But a few years back, we hear of *balie* being *asked* and *granted.* Now the farce of calling a parliament is dispensed with; no such form is even spoken of. A *balia* is "taken." And it is difficult to see any shade of difference in meaning between this phrase and a simple declaration on the part of the Signory that they intended to act without any reference whatever to the laws or forms of the constitution.

A "balia" was accordingly taken, without the slightest objection apparently on the part of any portion of the citizens; and by virtue of it a sort of privy council of thirty members, shortly increased to seventy, was named with almost absolute power. "Nor could there be any doubt," says Ammirato, "that this Council was useful to the Republic for the transaction of the business of which it had to treat, having less difficulty in conducting to a conclusion important affairs, than would have been the case if they had been entrusted to a greater number." It is curious to observe that the historian, writing in the time of Cosmo I., has already come to be ignorant of the nature of the objection to be made to the creation of this despotic council. No doubt the Council was numerous enough. It would have been still more efficient had it consisted of fewer members. And it is intelligible enough, that the Florentine citizens, being such as we have by this time learned to know them, found fault with the Council, if they objected to it at all, because it was not large enough to give seats to all those who would have liked the distinction of belonging to it. But the historian does not perceive that the real vice of the institution lay in the mode of its constitution, which rendered it the mere mouthpiece of the autocrat's will on any subject on which he might think fit to meddle with its deliberations.

Notwithstanding the peace made with Naples, there

A.D. 1480. were other circumstances besides the enmity which the mode of procuring that peace had engendered at Venice, calculated to disquiet the rulers of Florence as to the future. The Duke of Calabria, the Neapolitan king's son, had, as has been mentioned, remained at Siena during the truce. That city had, as usual, manifested its chronic hostility to Florence by seizing the opportunity offered by the late war of making itself a thorn in the side of the great Commonwealth, by joining the enemy and permitting him to make its territory a convenient base of operations against the Florentine armies. But now that peace had been made, it seemed likely that, also as usual, Siena would have to pay the penalty of her unneighbourly and un-Tuscan fraternization with despot princes. It was the old story of the Visconti alliances over again. The Duke of Calabria manifested no intention of moving from his Sienese quarters. The Florentines became anxious to know what it was that detained the prince, and why he did not profit by the peace so happily concluded, to return to his home and his respected father? The fact was, the Duke said, that the Sienese government was in such a state of disorganization, and quarrels among the citizens ran so high, that really his presence was required there as a moderator between them. He had been able, he was happy to say, to be of some service to them in this way, and really he did not see how for the present they could do without him.

There was indeed a philanthropic self-devotion about this self-imposed umpireship, only to be paralleled by the vigilant and kindly anxiety for the prevalence of order and social security manifested by some modern potentates with reference to states at yet greater distance from their own homes. But Florence, though for the present far too busily engaged with troubles and dangers of her own to have formed to herself any definite plans with regard to

the future of Siena, had yet ideas about manifest destiny, —which it must be admitted her past history had powerfully contributed to fix in her mind,—ideas incompatible with the existence of a monarchical form of government in any part of Tuscany. And it did occur to her that the Duke of Calabria was taking a deeper interest in Sienese affairs than could be supposed compatible with an intention of shortly severing all connection between himself and that community. Indeed, the necessary work arising out of acting as umpire in their quarrels had led him to inflict sentences of exile, imprisonment, fines, and death in a manner which had somewhat startled and alarmed the Sienese themselves. Siena began to desire very anxiously that her princely visitor should leave her to fight out her own quarrels, and return to his own home. And in Florence, "not only the leaders of the city, but the whole people, who are very subtle observers and interpreters of all things," says Macchiavelli,* were so much disturbed, that not seeing any remedy for the evil, inasmuch as Florence had just made an alliance with this Duke of Calabria's father, and was at enmity both with the Pope and with Venice, many men judged that "the liberty of the city had never been in so great danger as now." † A.D. 1486.

"But God," continues the historian, "who in similar extremities has always taken particular care of Florence, caused an unhoped-for circumstance to arise, which gave both the Pope and the Venetians more important matters to think about than the affairs of Tuscany."

This providential circumstance was nothing less than the sudden descent of the Turks on the coast of Italy, and the capture of the city of Otranto, with the slaughter of nearly,

* Ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 252.

† Curious to find the citizens talking, and Macchiavelli reporting their talk, in language which wholly ignores the loss of their liberty that they had already suffered.

A.D. 1480. if not absolutely, all its inhabitants. It must be concluded that "the extremity" was very severe in Florence to render the adoption of such a remedy by Providence necessary or proper; but it was unquestionably perfectly efficacious. The Turks took possession of the town and its walls; fortified themselves there, and commenced a system of sorties, which enabled them to ravage all the surrounding country.

Here was another case of extremity undeniably requiring remedy; and one wonders that it should not have occurred to Macchiavelli that Providence was paying rather a high price for this means of relieving the troubles of Florence. It must be supposed, however, that as the care of Providence for Florence was altogether "*particolare*," the fate of the inhabitants of Otranto was of no consequence in comparison.

The King of Naples recalled his son and the troops with him in all haste for the protection of his own dominions. The Duke, we are told, repined much at the sad necessity of leaving so fair a prospect as that which was opening itself before him, of making himself the master of Siena, and perhaps of all Tuscany. But there was no help for it. The evil and danger at home were too serious and too alarming; and the messages which came from the King his father too urgent to be neglected.

The Pope, on the other hand, was so thoroughly frightened at the absolute appearance in Italy of these dreaded infidels, the report of whose distant movements had for so many generations been a standing terror to Christendom, that he was fain to lay aside, at least for the while, all plans of family aggrandizement, and even all thoughts of vengeance. The Florentine government was given to understand that, if the Commonwealth were now to send an embassy to the Holy Father, humbly asking pardon for all the sins of the Republic against the Holy

See, there was a probability that their prayer might be heard. A.D. 1480.

Florence, though still fully minded to hang a dozen Archbishops, if such a number were found doing within her walls what the Archbishop of Pisa had done, still was very anxious for peace, and had no objection to confess that such executions were ecclesiastical irregularities, and needed the pardon of the Holy See. So an embassy was sent to Rome, and after the lapse of some time, intended to point the moral of their humble suing for admission to the Holy Father's presence, were admitted to audience by Sixtus. "At last the ambassadors, twelve in number, came to the feet of the pontiff, who, surrounded by his Cardinals, in excessive pomp, awaited them."* The reception took place under the portico of St. Peter's; and there the twelve citizens, "throwing themselves on the ground with every sign of the greatest humility, asked pardon for the faults of their country." Then the Pope, having slightly smitten each of them on the shoulders with a rod he held in his hand, and "certain sacred ceremonies which the Pontifical books contain with reference to these matters having been read,"† gave them absolution, and admitted them to the Church. But Sixtus, though he knew that he was compelled by dire necessity to grant the forgiveness they came to ask, and to be outwardly reconciled to Florence, yet could not refrain from speaking to them in "words full of pride and anger."‡. In short, he read them a severe lecture on the duty of laymen and lay governments towards the Holy See, and concluded by warning them that if ever again Florence fell into similar sin, it would be visited upon her much more severely than it had been this time.

Then at length he suffered the conventions of peace and the bull for the removal of the excommunication and inter-

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 254.

† Ammirato, lib. xxiv. Conf. 1138. ‡ *Ibid.*

A.D. 1480. dict to be read. But when the reading had been concluded, Sixtus told the Florentine envoys that the validity of this bull was dependent upon the condition that the Florentines should maintain at their own expense fifteen armed galleys during all the time that the Turk should remain in Italy, for the prosecution of the war against him. This condition took the Florentine ambassadors quite by surprise; for no mention had been made of any such stipulation in the course of the preliminary discussions on the terms of the peace to be made between the two powers, and the ambassadors now heard it for the first time from the lips of the Pope. The Florentines had no intention of submitting to anything of the sort; but the Holy Father would hear no word of remonstrance, and they were obliged to return with this condition tacked to the instruments they brought back with them from Rome. The Signory, however, sent Messer Guidantonio Vespucci to Rome for the formal ratification of the treaty, and he, before signing and sealing, contrived "by his prudence to bring matters to supportable terms."*

Thus, thanks to the providential burning of Otranto and the massacre of its inhabitants, Florence was purged of its ecclesiastical irregularities, and once again reconciled to the Father of the faithful.†

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 254.

† Ammirato, lib. xxiv. Conf. 1136—8.

CHAPTER II.

Changes in Italy produced by the peace between Florence and Naples—Turks driven from Otranto—The Pope and Venice make alliance—Quarrel of Venice with the Duke of Ferrara—Motives of the Venetians—and of the Pope—Ground of quarrel between Milan and Florence—Duke of Calabria begins the war—State of Rome—The Pope engages Malatesta di Rimini—Battle near Rome—Papal troops victorious—Death of Malatesta in Rome—Venetian successes against the Duke of Ferrara—The Pope suddenly makes peace—His motives—Conference at Cremona—Duke of Calabria routs the Venetians at Argenta—War against Venice—Venice makes a separate peace with Milan—to the anger of the other confederates—Florence and Milan—Venice regains by negotiation all she had lost in the war—Peace accepted by Florence and Naples—But not by the Pope—His rage—State of Rome—Death of Pope Sixtus IV.

THE sudden peace which Lorenzo had succeeded in making between Naples and Florence, as has been related, threw all the states of Italy into fresh relationships towards each other. For the anger which was felt by the Pope against the King of Naples for having made peace with his hated enemies the Medici without consulting him, was also felt by Venice against the Florentines, their allies in the late war, for having made peace with Naples without consulting them. This common anger and common offence caused the Pope and the Venetians to draw together; and this situation would have caused at once a new war, had it not been for the providential massacre by the Turks at Otranto, as has been explained.

But it was not to have been expected that the Turks, who had only been permitted by Providence to burn and sack Otranto and slaughter the inhabitants for the sake of

A.D. 1481. saving Florence in very critical circumstances of danger, would be allowed to remain there when that special object had been served. And in the September of the following year, 1481, the Sultan, Bajazet the Second, having died, and his sons having quarrelled among themselves (all quite providentially), the Turks were driven from Otranto by Alfonso, Duke of Calabria; and the infidels having been thus got rid of, the faithful, and especially the father of them, were left at leisure to fly at each other's throats as before.

In these fortunate circumstances, Pope Sixtus and Venice inclined to act together from the causes which have been explained, found in a common enmity to the Duke of Ferrara a ground for united action. Venice had certain litigated claims against the Duke with reference to that ever-recurring subject of quarrel between Venice and her neighbours—the supply of salt to the people living under their rule. It had been discovered at a very early period that salt was an article for which the subjects of a government which held the supply of it in its own hands, could be made to pay many times the real value of the article. And all sovereigns were therefore anxious to be the sole salt-purveyors to their lieges. Venice was a large producer of this necessary of life, and was always endeavouring by imposed treaties and otherwise to force her salt down the throats of her neighbours. Hercules, Duke of Ferrara, wished to have the salting of his people for himself. Hence Venice determined to put down Duke Hercules.

As for the Pope, the cause of offence which moved him to take up arms against the Duke of Ferrara was, as became a Pope, one of a less simply material kind. Whereas it had been perfectly well known to the Duke of Ferrara, as to the rest of the world, that the Florentines during their late impious and unnatural war against the Holy See, had been

excommunicated, interdicted, and in every possible way accursed, yet he, the said Duke, not having the fear of Heaven, or of Heaven's Vicegerent, before his eyes, but, on the contrary, having before his eyes certain thousands of golden florins to be paid to him by the said accursed Florentines, had willingly and wittingly taken service, and warred in their behalf against the Holy Father. A.D. 1481.

This was conduct that could not be allowed to go unpunished, and the Pontiff was desirous therefore of joining his arms to those of the Venetians for the purpose of chastising this audacious evil-doer.

These were the motives put forward by the Venetians and the Pope for attacking with their conjoined arms the Duke of Ferrara. And it must be supposed that either party, up to a certain time, believed in the sincerity of the other. They would hardly otherwise have acted together, inasmuch as the real ends which both of them had in view, were by no means compatible. The truth was, that Venice saw with an evil eye the gradually increasing power of a neighbour only separated from her by the river Po—a neighbour, too, who would not buy his salt of her (for this ground of complaint was really felt to be a very serious one at Venice), and who, into the bargain, was raising certain fortifications along his frontier on the banks of the river Po, in a suspicious and unsatisfactory manner; and the long-headed old grey-beards who managed the affairs of the Winged Lion, thought that the dominions of this Naboth at Ferrara would round very desirably the territory of the Republic. And Pope Sixtus, on his part, wanted a place in the world for the family he was bent on founding. There was too clearly, no room in Italy for a new crowned head to thrust itself up, unless some one of those existing were thrust down. It is true that a little place had already been made for the new Della Rovere by ousting the Ordelaffi from their possessions. But what was

A.D. 1481. Imola? Sixtus felt that he could not quit the scene in peace unless he had secured for the princely family which was to descend from the loins of the Franciscan mendicant monk, a better heritage than the poor little town and small territory of Imola, which had been all very well to begin with; and Ferrara, with its dukedom, was just the thing to suit him. It was "within distance," too, and could be "held," together with Imola, most conveniently. Bologna lay between, to be sure! But perhaps . . . those Bentivoglio fellows at Bologna were, after all, wrongfully holding a possession of the Church! The time would come for chastising them too! And then Florence itself, the odious, the accursed—Florence, with its hated Medici, who had been only scotched, not killed, by the knives of those bungling marplots last time . . . who knows? . . When a Della Rovere should be ruling from the Po to the Rubicon, with a Vicar of Christ ready to help by excommunications, interdicts, absolutions, bulls, grants, and a handful or so of troops, would those upstart Medici hold their own much longer? Only let a merciful Providence permit the fourth Sixtus to remain in his Vicarship yet a few years longer . . . only half-a-dozen years, say! . . . and the crown of Italy . . of Central Italy at least . . but why not of Italy? . . . Do not those impious men of the house of Aragon withhold tribute to which the Holy Church has a lawful and undoubted claim? . . . And is not swarthy Ludovick there at Milan, who is ousting his infant nephew from his rights in the most infamous manner, a wretch whom a genuine Vicar of Christ is bound to correct and crush? . . . . Of Italy, then! the crown of Italy may, after all, be destined not for any Visconti, or Sforza, or Aragonese, but for the son of the bare-foot Cordelier, who, by the help of God and St. Francis, had made himself master of the Papacy!

These were the thoughts with which Sixtus the Fourth,

on his side, began the war against Hercules, Duke of Ferrara. A.D. 1482.

There were other causes in motion, however, calculated to make the coming war, which the providential and merciful death of Bajazet II., and the consequent expulsion of the Turks from Otranto, left the Italians at leisure to fight out among themselves, general throughout all the peninsula. In Milan the wrongful ambition and unscrupulous encroachments of Ludovico il Moro, the uncle of the infant reigning Duke, had driven several of the most powerful vassals and subjects of the duchy into rebellion; and swarthy Ludovick had asked aid of Florence; that is, of the Medici, to put them down. At Genoa, Fregosò, the new Doge, was giving uneasiness to the Florentines by intriguing with some of the hill-country chieftains of the district of the Lunigiana, among the mountains behind and to the south of the Gulf of Spezia; and troops had to be sent to the fortress of Sarzanella, on the river Magra, to watch and hold in check any movements dangerous to the present territory or to the ultimate views of Florence.

Thus the year 1482 opened* with all the prospects of as pretty a quarrel in Italy as the most enthusiastically professional military gentleman could desire.

In this condition of things the Venetians opened the ball, by over-running the territory of Ferrara, with Roberto di Sanseverino, one of the Milanese chieftains who had been driven into rebellion by the usurpation of Ludovico il Moro, for their general. The Florentines, in league with the King of Naples, at the same time made Frederick, Duke of Urbino, their general.

The Pope had not as yet declared himself. It was determined, therefore, between the Florentines and Naples that the Duke of Calabria should march his father's army

* Ammirato, lib. xxv. Gonf. 1145.

A.D. 1482. to the river Tronto, and then ask leave of the Pope to pass northwards through the States of the Church, to the assistance of the Duke of Ferrara, wrongfully attacked by the Venetians. If this permission should be refused, it was to be considered as equivalent to a declaration of hostilities on the part of the Pontiff. Sixtus peremptorily refused to allow the Neapolitan troops to pass; and the Florentines and the King determined at once to attack him as actively as possible. The Duke of Calabria accordingly marched towards Rome, while Florence sent troops to Citta di Castello, on the not very difficult enterprise of once again setting up the authority of Niccolò Vitelli in that city, and wresting it from the Church. This attack was a successful one; for on the 19th of June the Ecclesiastical authorities were driven out, and Vitelli took possession of the city.*

Nor was the enterprise undertaken by the Duke of Calabria altogether so arduous an one as it might seem, for Rome was as usual divided against itself. The Orsini were the Pope's friends; and therefore, of course the Colonnas were ready to embrace the cause of the enemy.

The accounts which have come down to us of the condition of the Eternal City at that time, give a terrible picture of the social life of a city subjected to the rule of a priest, and that such a priest as the monk Sixtus the Fourth. The scarcity of all necessaries was extreme; the distress very great, and the discontent threatening. A large portion of the Papal force, however much needed in the field, was necessarily detained in Rome for fear of a rising of the people. Wine was hardly to be procured. Many taverns were shut up in consequence of the absolute impossibility of obtaining food and drink to offer their customers. Grain was at an unprecedented price; and the bakers were compelled, under pain of fine and imprisonment, to pur-

* Ammirato, lib. xxv. Gonf. 1147.

chase their supplies at granaries established by the Pope for the storing of inferior corn imported by him at a low price from Naples, and sold at an enormous profit. And the bread made from this grain, says Infessura, "was black, stinking, and abominable; it was eaten only from hard necessity; and was the cause of much disease."* A.D. 1482.

The Pope found himself in great difficulties, says Machiavelli,† while such was the state of things within the walls of Rome, and the enemy was scouring the country outside of them. "Nevertheless, like a man of courage, who was determined to conquer and not to yield," he engaged the celebrated Captain Roberto Malatesta of Rimini, brought him to Rome, and placed him at the head of the Papal forces. The Conte Girolamo had also brought up as large a force as he could from his towns of Imola and Forli. And on the 21st of August, 1482, these two generals gave battle to the Neapolitan troops under the Duke of Calabria, and defeated them, so entirely that the Duke himself would have remained prisoner in the hands of the enemy, if he had not been rescued and brought off by certain Turks in his army, who, after the expulsion of their countrymen from Otranto, had taken service with the conqueror.‡ The battle lasted six hours, and was more bravely contested than the battles on Italian ground usually were in those days. More than a thousand men were recorded to have fallen, and three hundred of the Neapolitan army were made prisoners, including a great number of its leaders.§

This victory, however, led to no very decisive consequences. Of course it was made the most of in Rome.

* Life of Cattarina Sforza, by the present writer; Il Notario di Nantiporto, Rer. Ital. Script. tom. iii. part 2, p. 1183; Stefano Infessura, *ibid.*

† Ed. cit. v. ii. p. 259.

‡ Macchiavelli, ed. cit, vol. ii. p. 260.

§ Ammirato, lib. xxv. Conf. 1148.

A.D. 1482. The two successful generals marched into the city in triumph. But Roberto di Malatesta survived to enjoy the results of his victory only fifteen days. He died in Rome, in all probability of fever produced either by over-exertion under an August sun on the day of the battle, or by the pestiferous air of the papal city, to the deadly effects of which a fresh comer within those walls would be more especially liable. But public rumour, as usual, spoke of poison; and attributed his death to the Conte Girolamo's jealousy of his share in the command of the forces. Such accusations are of interest only as indicative of the motives which the public mind of the time deemed, with probability, attributable to its great men, and of the deeds which were considered likely to have been perpetrated.

Roberto Malatesta was buried in the church of St. Peter with all honour, "with sixty-four torches, and many banners, and many standards, of which one bore his arms and this motto: '*Veni, vidi, vici; Victoriam Sisto dedi; Mors invidit gloriæ,*' and a catafalque, as if he had been a pope." The more acute contemporary diarist, Infessura, in recording these funeral honours, writes that once upon a time, Siena having been liberated from the Florentines by some great captain, the Sienese were at a great loss what honours and recompense to award him. Whereupon a citizen rose and said, "Let us put him to death, and then worship him as a Saint, and so make him our perpetual protector;" which was accordingly done. "Now, it is said,—not that I altogether believe it," honestly adds Infessura, who bitterly hated Sixtus, "that the Pope imitated these Sienese in the matter of Malatesta's death, and the honours shown to his dead body." *

But while these things had been passing in and around Rome, the Venetians had been making more serious pro-

* Life of Catt. Sforza; Infessura apud Mulatori, Script. Rer. Ital. tom. iii.

gress against the Duke of Ferrara in his own territory. A.D. 1482.
The Duke of Urbino, the General-in-chief of the league opposed to them, fell ill in the camp, was carried to Bologna, and there shortly died; thus compensating the loss which the opposite party had incurred from the death of Roberto Malatesta; and leaving the forces which had been protecting Ferrara in such a state of disorganization, that the Venetians seemed to be on the point of seizing the much-desired prey.

At this conjuncture, however, the whole face of Italy, and the complex relationships of the different states towards each other, were suddenly changed by an unexpected turn in the policy of the Pope. There could be no doubt, thought Ammirato, that Sixtus suddenly became aware that the increase of power which Venice was on the point of securing for herself, would be dangerous to the temporal interests of the Papacy. In other words, he began to see that, if he and the Venetians together succeeded in dispossessing the Duke of Ferrara of his states, the prize would, as matters were going, fall to the Venetians and not to him. But there was also another motive which, as Macchiavelli points out, had, in all probability, a considerable share in bringing about this sudden change in the policy of the Holy Father. "The King of Naples and the Florentines," says the historian, "strove their utmost to bend the Pope to their will; and not being able to make him yield by force of arms, they threatened him with the Council, which the Emperor had already announced as to be held at Bâle."

This was a threat which few popes, and Sixtus the Fourth as little as any who ever sate in St. Peter's seat, could afford to disregard. A Council was always a word of fear to a reigning Pope, and the whispering of it in the Pope's ear by the Florentine and Neapolitan agents, had, there can be little doubt, the effect which Macchiavelli attributes to it.

A.D. 1483. The consequence was, that a treaty of peace was formally signed between the Pope and the King of Naples, and the Florentines and the Duke of Milan, at ten o'clock at night, on the 12th of December, 1482.* The Pope immediately intimated to the Venetians his pleasure that they should cease from war against the Duke of Ferrara. But instead of paying any heed to his injunction, they pressed on towards that city more eagerly than ever, and had advanced so close to the walls, that their camp was pitched in the park of the Duke himself.†

But now the Venetians had all Italy leagued against them; and the sovereigns of the allied states held a conference at Cremona for the purpose of determining the part that each of them was to take in the conduct of the war against the Winged Lion. There were present a Papal legate, the Conte Girolamo, the Duke of Calabria, Ludovico il Moro the Duke's uncle on the part of Milan, and among the other "sovereigns" Lorenzo de' Medici, yielding, we may be very sure, to no one of the assembly in any of that upholsterer-and-mercer-supplied majesty which should hedge a king. Ammirato says that he went to the meeting with the name of an ambassador, but in reality with very much greater power and authority.

This assembly was held in Cremona at the close of February, 1483.

Before, however, any of the arrangements which had been agreed on at the meeting could be put into execution, the Venetian troops had gained new successes under the very walls of Ferrara. Despatches were sent off in all haste to the Florentines, to Giovanni Bentivoglio of Bologna, and to the Lord of Faenza, urging them to hurry up their contingents, to save the city from the imminent peril in which it stood. But the Duke of Calabria, piqued by the

* Ammirato, lib. xxv. Conf. 1150.

† Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 261.

audacity of the enemy, and too impatient to wait till the forces of the allies could come up, engaged the Venetian army at a place in the neighbourhood of Ferrara called Argenta, and inflicted on it a very serious defeat. A great number of prisoners were taken, and among them Luigi Marcello, the Venetian "Proveditore," which title seems to have been in the Venetian armies equivalent to that of "Commissario" in those of Florence. A.D. 1483.

Venice, however, though opposed single-handed, or almost so, to the rest of Italy, and that in the prosecution of an enterprise dictated by the mere lust of conquest, had, notwithstanding the rebuff received at Argenta, not the smallest intention of relinquishing her grasp on the prey which seemed so nearly her own. She engaged the services of the Duke of Lorraine (scarcely recognizable by readers of Macchiavelli as the *Duca dello Reno*), who had inherited the claims of the Angevine pretenders to the crown of Naples;—more useful, probably, in that quality as a menace to the Duke of Calabria and his father, than as a general in the field. She encouraged and assisted the Rossi, Lords of Parma, as a thorn in the side of the Duke of Milan. She backed up the Doge of Genoa in his attempts on Sarzana, and the district of the Lunigiana, in order to give Florence something else to do and to think of besides opposing her at Ferrara. And she assisted and excited the Sienese "*fuorusciti*" to contrive mischief against the territory of the Pope.*

But despite all this activity, the Venetians were overmatched, and the tide of success began to run against them. The Pope, more furious against his recent accomplices, who meant to play him false in the disposition of the plunder when it should have been seized, than he had been against the intended victim of his cupidity, launched

* Ammirato, lib. xxv. Conf. 1152.

A.D. 1484. excommunication and curses of all the most venomous kinds at the Venetians. He entitled the league against them "Santissima," and in all ways worked his spiritual engines of war against the Republic to the full as actively as any member of the league did those of the fleshly arm.

The Duke of Calabria, after his success at Argenta, entered Lombardy with an army composed of twelve thousand cavalry and two thousand infantry, and made himself master of all the territory of Bergamo, Brescia, and Verona, being with great difficulty prevented by Roberto di Sanseverino, the Venetian general, from gaining possession of those cities themselves.

During the whole of 1483, in short, though no action of decisive importance took place, the war went against the Venetians. As for the Duke of Lorraine, he had already tired of his pretensions to the Neapolitan crown; and when the year for which he had been hired had expired, he quietly marched back again into France. And when, after a winter passed quietly in winter quarters, the war was renewed in the spring of 1484, there seemed to be every probability that the proud Queen of the Adriatic would be on the point of losing all that she possessed on the mainland. But she was saved by the number of her enemies. It could hardly be that four leading Italian powers, to say nothing of the smaller satellites of these, should preserve for a second year an alliance, the duration of which depended on their continuing to have the same wishes and the same fears.*

Federigo Gonzaga, Marquis of Mantua, had died during that winter; and it had been he mainly who had been the means of keeping the Duke of Calabria and Ludovico of Milan on good terms together; and now he was gone, dissension very soon began to arise between them. Gio-

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 264.

vanni Galeazzo, the young Duke of Milan, who was held in a condition of pupilage by his uncle Ludovico Il Moro, was betrothed * to the daughter of the Duke of Calabria; and the latter was desirous that his intended son-in-law should assume the reins of government, and wield the real power of the state in the place of Ludovico. But this the swarthy Ludovick had no intention whatever of permitting, either then or at any future time. A.D. 1484.

Now all these grounds of jealousy and disagreement were quite as well known to the Venetian Senators sitting in the ducal palace on the Riva dei Schiavoni in Venice, as they were to the inmost thoughts of either of the parties. And therein those long-headed old rulers thought they saw the possible means of extricating themselves from the position of great peril and difficulty into which their desire to possess their neighbour's vineyard had led them.

This opportunity well used was improved by Venice into a means, as Macchiavelli says, of "winning back, by making peace, all that they had lost by war, according to their usual practice." Having found the means of negotiating secretly with Ludovico, the wrongfulness of whose position made him especially suspicious, and fearful respecting the intentions of the Duke of Calabria, they induced him to conclude a separate and momentarily secret peace with them in the summer of 1484.

When this became known to the other allies it excited no small amount of indignation; especially when it turned out that the terms of the convention made between Ludovico on the part of Milan and the Venetians, included not only the restoration to Venice of all that had been taken from her, but also the possession by her of Rovigo and the district called the Polesine, † which had previously belonged

* Not married, as Macchiavelli says.—Muratori ad Ann. 1484. Annali, vol. xxiii. p. 88.

† Ammirato has, most unusually with him, fallen into error in stating

A.D. 1484. to Ferrara, but was now in the occupation of the allies. Nor was even this all. It had been stipulated by the Venetian negotiators, who, whatever might be the fortune and fate of the Venetian arms, were invariably the victorious superiors of their adversaries in the conference chamber, that all those vexatious claims on the Duchy of Ferrara, which had been the primary causes or at least pretexts for the war, should be allowed and finally settled in their favour. Well might the allies be displeased and discontented! Venice, after having raised all Italy in arms against her for the prevention of an audacious project of spoliation dictated by her unscrupulous ambition, after having been worsted in the appeal to arms to such a degree as to have been in the greatest danger of losing all her possessions in Lombardy, living under the ban of Rome, and apparently at the mercy of the armies of the allied powers, was not only to be allowed to escape all penalty for the wrong she had designed, and the evils she had inflicted on Italy, but was absolutely to be enriched at the expense of the victim whom all Italy had risen in arms to defend, and to have all those points for the sake of which she had professed to quarrel with her neighbour, decided in her favour, and according to her reading of them. Well might Macchiavelli say, that it seemed to the allies, that after having waged a war in which immense sums had been spent, and in which the balance of military success had been all on their side, they were invited to make a peace in which all the credit of success would be on the side of the enemy.

Nevertheless, the peace was accepted by Florence and by Milan. Both these powers were weary of the war, and

that the Polesine was restored to Ferrara. The ordinarily less accurate Macchiavelli is right on this occasion in saying that this district was allowed to remain to Venice.—Ammirato, lib. xxv. Gonf. 1160; Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 264; Muratori, Annali ad ann. 1484, vol. xxiii. p. 90.

their finances were exhausted. The contest was not one in which their own interests were primarily concerned. Or at least in so far as it might be the case that it was of vital importance to their future prospects that Venice should not acquire such an accession of strength as would have accrued to her from the absolute absorption of Ferrara and its Duchy, their object was gained, and that danger had been obviated. Besides, if the war were to be continued, it would have to be carried on under the new conditions which had been made by Ludovico Il Moro, not against Venice alone, but against Venice and Milan; a very different thing. The principal advantages gained against Venice had been the occupation of territory in Lombardy; and there would have been small hope of being able to hold this against an alliance of Milan and Venice, in itself a conjunction dangerous in many points of view to the rest of Italy. A.D. 1484.

There were besides other reasons, which lessened the disinclination of both Florence and Naples to accept the peace which had been thus made for them. Florence was anxious to be at liberty to give her undivided attention to the recovery of Sarzana, and to put an end to the encroachments of the Genoese in that region, which she had hitherto been unable to accomplish in consequence of the forces provided for that purpose having been called off to attend to the pressing requisitions of the war in Lombardy. And the Neapolitan king had been alarmed by the successful operations of a Venetian fleet, which the Republic had despatched to the coast of Naples, and which had already taken Gallipoli, Nardo, Monopoli, and some other places, and was laying siege to Taranto.*

So the peace was eventually signed by the plenipoten-

* Muratori, Annali ad ann. 1484.

A.D. 1484. tiaries of Naples, Florence, Milan, and Venice on the 7th of August, 1484, at Bagnolo.*

But what about the Pope? What of the Holy Father, who had made war first in alliance with the Venetians against Ferrara in the hope that he might use them as cat's-paws to obtain the prize he was bent on seizing for the aggrandizement of his family; and who had, secondly, when he found that there was no hope of his being able to turn the wily Venetian Senators to any such purpose, made war, both temporal and spiritual, against his late allies, still hoping that in the confusion of a state of universal warfare he might ultimately attain the object for which he had lived? There had been no envoy at Bagnolo on behalf of the Papal See. Peace had been made with no notification to him or consent of his:—without consulting his wishes or asking his blessing!

Muratori, in his annals, when giving the reasons which induced Naples and Florence to consent to the peace, adds that there were also troubles in Rome which led the Holy Father to approve of the cessation of war in Italy. But there is abundant testimony that such was very far from being the case. Macchiavelli says that the peace was so odious to him, that it is probable that the news of it killed him.† Ammirato says directly that he died of grief at hearing of it.‡ But the best and most striking evidence on the subject is that of Stefano Infessura, the contemporary Roman diarist, whose work bears the most undeniable internal marks of truthfulness and integrity. Surely Muratori must have forgotten the pages which he had himself edited in the third volume of his great collection. The picture given us of the condition of Rome during the Pon-

* Ammirato, lib. xxv. Gonf. 1160; Macchiavelli, edit. cit. vol. ii. p. 264; Muratori, Ann. *ibid.*

† Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 266.

‡ Ammirato, lib. xxv. Gonf. 1160.

tificate of Sixtus the 4th, and more especially of the latter part of it, and of that Pope himself, in the day by day record of this "scribe of the Senate and People of Rome," as he calls himself, is a most graphic and striking one. A.D. 1484.

Truly enough there were troubles at Rome,—"*torbidi*," as Muratori mildly phrases it,—which might have well made the occupant of St. Peter's seat sigh for peace. But these troubles were not new in Rome. They had existed when Sixtus projected his scheme of spoliation, and joined the Venetians in their war against Ferrara. Troubles, indeed! Some few words have been written in the preceding pages descriptive in some measure of the condition of the Eternal City during those years. But those who would form for themselves an adequate conception of what the life of Rome was in the last part of the 15th century should read, not only the curiously minute and detailed record of Infessura, but also the entirely confirmatory and equally contemporary account of another diarist, the anonymous "Notario di Nantiporto," whose work precedes that of Infessura in Muratori's great collection.

The mutually corroborating pages of these two authors disclose a scene of lawless violence, of ubiquitous insecurity, of iniquity, cruelty, oppression, bloodshed and anarchy that was probably never equalled in any other part or age of the civilized world.

The special trouble of the Pope during those summer months of 1484, which were the last of his life, arose from the rebellion of the Colonna race, which he was endeavouring to put down by the help of the Orsini. The Conte Girolamo was besieging the famous Colonna stronghold of Palliano. At the beginning of August, the Count writes to His Holiness that "we have posted all our instruments of war, but have no hope of taking the place by this means, by reason of the loftiness of the situation. Also because

A.D. 1484. the adversaries are very strong, and show themselves exceedingly ferocious and audacious."*

And when Sixtus read these letters he sighed deeply, and was greatly saddened, says Infessura. But none the more for all that was it true that he was prepared to hear with approbation, or with any other feeling than the most bitter rage and despair, of the peace which was even then being signed without his knowledge in Lombardy. It was the frustration of his last hope for the accomplishment of his great project. In the early days of his Papacy, the efforts of Sixtus to turn his elevation to account for the purpose of making his son the founder of a princely family had been crowned with success by the establishment of Girolamo Riario as Signor of Imola and Forli. But this was a success very much too small to satisfy the "royal-minded" ambition of the mendicant monk; and the bolder attempt which had followed, to acquire for him the dominion of Florence at the cost of so much black and odious guilt, had signally failed. A second attempt, equal probably in criminality, and still more odious from the base ingratitude and treachery involved in the circumstances of it, by which Sixtus thought to get possession of the inheritance of Malatesta of Rimini, who died in the service of the Church,—an attempt which adds no little probability to the notion that the victorious general was poisoned on his triumphal entry into Rome,—was also foiled by the opposition of the Florentines. And now his last hope was failing him, as the probability of peace made his endeavours to appropriate the dukedom of Ferrara fruitless.

A few days after the bad news from Palliano, which baulked his vengeance on the Colonna, and made Sixtus sigh so deeply, came the far more fatal news of the peace of Bagnolo. It reached Rome on the 11th of August.

* "Multum feroces seu audaces se ostendunt."

The messengers, with decorously malicious hypocrisy, pretended to think that they were the bearers of acceptable tidings;—enlarged on the blessings thus secured to Italy, which must be so consolatory to the paternal heart of the father of the faithful;—and congratulated him on the prospect of desirable repose opening at last to the bleeding country! Their every word was a rankling stab to the heart of the despairing but still implacable Pontiff. Willingly would he have clutched with those shaking hands, which he was compelled to raise in hypocritical benediction, the throats of these babblers of peace and reconciliation. But the blow was fatal to the sinking old man. Ferrara and its fair dukedom would never now belong to kith or kin of his. So on the 13th of August, Sixtus turned his face to the wall and died.* A.D. 1484.

* Life of Cath. Sforza, by the present writer; Infessura, Apud. Rer. Ital. Script. tom. iii. part 2nd, p. 1182.

CHAPTER III.

General peace—Florence, however, has still to recover Sarżana from the Genoese—The Bank of St. George—Its history and nature—Holds the sovereignty of Pietrasanta—This right respected by Florence—Pietrasanta taken by the Florentines—Claim put in by Lucca—Recovery of Sarzana deferred, first by Lorenzo's illness—and then by the war of the Neapolitan king against the Barons—Origin of this quarrel—which once again plunges all Italy into war—Small results of the war—King of Naples makes peace—but does not observe the terms agreed on—Florence returns to the work of recovering Sarzana—Efforts of the Pope to arrange this quarrel—Marriage of the Pope's son with Maddalena de' Medici—Florence obtains possession of Sarzana—General peace in Italy—Prosperity of Florence under Lorenzo de' Medici—Deceptive nature of this prosperity—Loss of liberty in Florence—Further progress of despotic power—Nature of the government of the Medici—Scope of Macchiavelli's "Prince"—General tendency of the Italian mind in such speculations—Effect of this tone of thought in contributing to the introduction of despotic power—Liberty not prized aright in Florence—Subjection of the inhabitants of the territory of the Commonwealth—Remarkable instance of Florentine feeling on this head—Appearances of prosperity in the time of Lorenzo—Nature of the literature that flourished under Lorenzo—Art and artists under Lorenzo—The transitional nature of the epoch conferred certain exceptional advantages on the Art of that time—Material prosperity of Florence under Lorenzo questioned—Peculations of Lorenzo—Final struggles of Florentine freedom.

Sixtus died on the 13th, and Giovanni Battista Cibo, a Genoese, was elected as his successor on the 29th of the same month,—August, 1484—under the name of Innocent VIII. Rome, the anarchy and abominations of which had been bad enough during the lifetime of Pope Sixtus, became a veritable hell upon earth, an arena crowded with furious wild beasts let loose to tear each other to pieces, during the period of the interregnum.

Peace, however,—such peace as was possible in so profoundly corrupt and disorganized a society,—was restored by the new Pope, who, though very far indeed from possessing even the exterior semblance of such qualities as may be supposed to be needed for the tolerably decent occupation of such a position, was not a man of raging evil passions like his predecessor. "A humane and quiet sort of man he was," says Macchiavelli. "He did not inherit any of the late Pope's furious hatred and resentment against the Colonna family. He wished for peace and quiet, and obtained it, so far as such a condition of things was possible at Rome." A.D. 1484.

And thus all the leading states of Italy were once again for a very short interval at peace, with the exception of Florence. She had still to recover possession of her dependencies Sarzana and Sarzanella, and was now at last able to turn all her attention and power to that object. It was one, indeed, which Florence had had much more nearly at heart during all the time of the late war, than any of the interests for the sake of which the contest in Lombardy had been raging. But the obligations which bound the Commonwealth to her allies, and the supposed interest she had in not allowing the affairs of Italy to be arranged without her participation, had compelled her to send to the seat of war forces which she would much rather have employed for the recovery of these outlying portions of the territory of the Republic. In the previous year Florence had sent her Condottieri, Orsini, Conte de' Pitigliano, and Rinuccio Farnese on this business; but had been obliged before anything had been accomplished to send away the former of those generals into Lombardy.

Before marching to the seat of the war, the Count of Pitigliano had expressed his opinion that, with a view to the reduction of Sarzana, it would be necessary for the Florentines to make themselves masters of the little town

A.D. 1484. of Pietrasanta, situated between Pisa and Sarzana, on the lowest slope and at the foot of the hills, which there leave but a very narrow strip of olive-coloured plain between the Apennine and the sea. The Signory, however, had not permitted Pietrasanta to be attacked, because it was not held by the Genoese, with whom they were at war on account of the occupation of Sarzana, but by the Bank of St. George, with whom they had no cause of quarrel.

This Bank of St. George, which was thus recognized as the lawful sovereign of a town and territory, with which the so-entitled bankers had no connection by birth or habitation whatsoever, was a very remarkable institution. It belonged wholly and exclusively to Genoa; and it is a curious illustration of the modes of Italian mediæval feeling and thinking on subjects of social and international arrangement, that this essentially private Genoese establishment should have been recognized by the foreign power of Florence as having interests and rights separate and distinguishable from those of the State which had created it, and under the rule of which it existed.

The Bank of St. George was founded in 1407. The finances of Genoa were at that time in a very unsatisfactory condition; the public debt was heavy, and had been contracted at different times under different conditions, with different bodies of creditors. With a view to remedy the evils arising from this state of things, the debt was at the period mentioned consolidated, the interest which had averaged ten per cent. was reduced to one uniform rate of seven, and a large and powerful company was constituted, which, in consideration of an assignment of the customs duties, and various important privileges, assumed the position of sole creditor of the State on these terms. Among these privileges the Genoese historians gravely reckon, as one of the principal, the right of the bank

to the style and title of "Most Illustrious;" though it may be doubted whether that dignity counted for more than it was financially worth with the shrewd commercial men to whom the concession was first granted. There were sundry other special rights conceded to the new company of a far more valuable and practical kind,—privileges of jurisdiction, of inalienability of the shares, and others. A palace, situated under the same roof with the custom-house, at which all the duties on all the commerce of Genoa were paid, was assigned to the corporation as the seat of its administration; and the revenues came immediately and under its own supervision into its coffers. The result of these valuable privileges, and in a yet greater degree of an enlightened, active, and strictly upright administration of the vast affairs and interests thus entrusted to the new company, soon made the Bank of St. George an exceedingly wealthy corporation, and obtained for it the favour and confidence of the commercial public, not only of Genoa, but of the other trading cities of Italy. The constant influx of ready money into its coffers from the receipt of the customs duties, and the large deposits which the confidence inspired by the Genoese bank in the public and admirable management of its affairs attracted, placed it in a position to transact a large banking and discount business under very advantageous circumstances. Then again, no long time passed before the community of Genoa had once more occasion to borrow; and it was a matter of course, under the circumstances, that the rulers of the city should address themselves to the wealthy and prosperous Bank of St. George. "L' Illustrissimo San Giorgio," as the Italian writers call the establishment, was quite willing to lend, and received as guarantee for its capital and interest the sovereignty and revenues of some one of the dependent towns or districts of the Republic. San Giorgio proved as enlightened and successful a ruler as he had shown

A.D. 1484.

A.D. 1484. himself a clever and upright banker. The subjects thus placed under his government were contented, and San Giorgio's coffers became fuller than ever. Again and again the government of Genoa, the "Superbness" of which was such, that it experienced considerable difficulty in making both ends meet, found itself obliged to contract new loans; and again and again the same operation with the great banking company was repeated; till the greater part of the territory and dependencies of, the State were in pawn to, and under the wise government of, the "Most Illustrious Corporation," which every year sent its governors into the various towns and communities under its rule, without any interference on the part of the government of the city.

"From these circumstances," says Macchiavelli, "it has arisen, that the Genoese have withdrawn their affection from the government, as being subject to tyranny, and have given it to San Giorgio, as being an establishment well and equitably administered; and hence it comes to pass that the government of that city is exposed to such frequent changes, and is subjected at one moment to some one of its own citizens, and at another to some foreigner. Because it is not San Giorgio, but the city that changes its government. So that when there was a struggle for supremacy between the Fregosi and the Adorni, inasmuch as the contest concerned the government of the commune, the greater part of the citizens held themselves aloof, and left that as the prize of the conqueror, whichever he might be. And the corporation of San Giorgio acted in the same manner; only taking care that whichever party made themselves masters of the government, it should swear to observe the laws and privileges of the Bank. And these, in fact, have never been changed to this day; for inasmuch as the corporation has money, and authority, and arms in its hands, it is impossible for the government to make any

alteration in its laws, without incurring the danger of a certain and most perilous rebellion."* A.D. 1484.

An Englishman will scarcely read this account of the position held by the famous Bank of St. George of Genoa, without being led to compare it with another example of a great trading corporation, led by the force of circumstances into the exercise of sovereign authority. And certain theorists will not fail to find support for their favourite doctrines from the certainly striking fact, that two purely mercantile bodies should have been so strangely called to fill the position of sovereign rulers and administrators, and should both have been so eminently successful in the enterprise thus thrust upon them.†

The sovereignty of Pietrasanta had, in the manner above described, become vested in the Bank, or as the old Italian historians phrase it, in San Giorgio; and Florence recognizing, strangely enough, that corporation as having an existence and rights separate from those of the State of Genoa, scrupled to attack the town belonging to it without any just cause of quarrel with the Bank. But before the end of the war in Lombardy, Agostino Fregoso, who had seized Sarzana, doubting of his ability to hold it against the Florentines, gave that town also to the Bank. Shortly after the peace, moreover, when Florence, now free to attend with all her forces to her own affairs, was recommencing her efforts for the recovery of Sarzana, an expedition, sent out from the Florentine camp between Pisa and Pietrasanta, was attacked on its march by the people of the latter town, and a legitimate *casus belli* thus established

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 269.

† For a more exact and detailed account of the celebrated Bank of St. George, the reader may consult, Serra, Storia di Genova; the "Discorso Quinto" at the end of the fourth volume of the Capolago edition of 1835; also the "Descrizione di Genova e del Genovesato," published on occasion of the Scientific Congress in that city, in 1846, part 3, p. 148.

A.D. 1484. between Florence and San Giorgio. That powerful corporation, in nowise shrinking from the impending struggle with the Florentine power, immediately sent a strong force to Sarzana, and fitted out a fleet to co-operate with it on the coast.

Jacopo Guicciardini was sent in the first instance as commissary to superintend the war on the part of Florence. But various successes on the side of the enemy so disheartened the Florentine army that, at the beginning of October, the generals decided that it would be best to go into winter quarters, and leave the prosecution of the work in hand till the following spring. This decision caused the most lively indignation in Florence, when the news of it reached the city. The Commissary was recalled, and Antonio Pucci and Bernardo del Nero were sent in his place. They succeeded in inducing the army to return again to the attack. An important outwork of the defences was taken, and shortly afterwards, at the beginning of the winter, Pietrasanta capitulated. "In order that the matter might be concluded more reputably," says Macchiavelli, "Lorenzo de' Medici thought proper to betake himself to the camp," for the receiving of the capitulation.

As soon as Pietrasanta was in the possession of Florence, Lucca put in a claim that the town thus taken from the corporation of San Giorgio should be given up to her, as the original and rightful possessor of it, in comformity with the terms of the last general peace, by which it had been agreed that all the territory taken from any of the belligerents in the course of the war should be restored to them. The Florentine Signory did not deny the reasonableness of the claim, but replied that, in the first place, it remained to be seen whether they should not be obliged by the terms of the peace, which was about, they trusted, to be made between them and Genoa, to restore Pietrasanta to the Genoese; and, in the second place, even if

that were not to be the case, it would be necessary for Lucca, first of all, not only to indemnify Florence for all the expense of the siege, but also to recompense her for all the valuable lives of citizens which had been lost in getting possession of the place. Now the taking of this little town had been fatal to an unusually large number of persons; for the malaria, which still to a slight degree exists in the alluvial low grounds between the foot of the Apennine and the sea, prevailed at that time with much greater intensity, and this had been far more extensively fatal to the Florentine army than the weapons of the enemy. Among others, Antonio Pucci, the commissary, had fallen a victim to it. The final success of the Florentine arms, after a repulse which had been felt in the city as disgraceful, was due to him, and he had become a highly popular man in Florence in consequence. His death had been regretted as a public calamity, and it was probable therefore, under the circumstances, that Lucca would have found the indemnification, which she was in any case called on to pay before receiving Pietrasanta, a very costly affair. A.D. 1485.

But this matter could not be entertained by the Signory till the peace with Genoa had been made; and peace with Genoa could not be made till Sarzana had been recovered. And the effort for the recovery of Sarzana, which it was intended to make in the spring of the following year, 1485, had to be deferred in consequence of two circumstances, which both of them indicate the progress made by Florence towards the establishment of a principality. The first of these was the illness of Lorenzo, which made it necessary for him to visit certain baths in the territory of Siena; and the second was a new war, which sprang up between the Neapolitan barons, supported by the Pope, and the King of Naples.* Things had come to a bad pass in

* Macchiavelli, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 273.

A.D. 1485. Florence, when the casual illness and absence of an individual citizen could prevent the Commonwealth from proceeding with public measures deemed necessary to its interests; and the second of the causes assigned by Machiavelli as that which prevented immediate steps for the recovery of Sarzana from being taken, is an indication of a far more fatal result of the position, which the Medici had succeeded in making for themselves; for the only motives which Florence had for meddling in anywise with this war between the King of Naples and his feudatories were reasons of *dynastic* policy. A new word in Florentine politics, and a word of baleful omen!

Dynastic interests mean simply the interests of one individual as opposed to those of the body of his fellow-citizens; and the time had already come when the power and resources of Florence were to be used for the sake of making safer the position of him who had slipped the yoke over her neck.

The war was caused by the increasing weight of the tyranny exercised by the King of Naples over the barons his feudatories. The eager desire of both the old King and the Duke of Calabria, his son, to collect and store up money, which, as Ammirato says,* they could not get into their possession without the death of the owners thereof, induced them to plot secret intrigues against the barons, which became known to the latter, and drove them to take up arms against the sovereign. This is Ammirato's explanation of the origin of the war; and he was, it will be remembered, a Neapolitan. Doubtless the quarrel in its general outlines was much of the same nature as similar contests between the barons and the crown in other countries. The important feature in the matter, as regards the future social development of that country, consists in the

* Ammirato, lib. xxv. Gonf. 1167.

fact that the King of Naples was wholly successful in the struggle. A.D. 1485.

The town of Aquila, in the Abruzzi, not very far from the frontier between the Neapolitan and the Papal States, though acknowledging the suzerainty of the Neapolitan King, yet lived in a state of ill-defined but practical independence under the rule of the Counts of Montorio. The Duke of Calabria, being in that part of the country with an army, for the purpose of putting down certain insurrectionary movements which had occurred there, sent to the Count of Montorio, requesting him to come to him at his camp, for the purpose of concerting measures for accomplishing the object in view. The Count went to wait on his sovereign without any suspicion; but was immediately made prisoner, and sent off to Naples. The consequence of this was that the important town of Aquila rose instantly in open insurrection, and despatched messengers to Pope Innocent, offering itself to the Holy See, if he would defend it against the King of Naples. Innocent eagerly embraced the opportunity of adding to the territory of the Church; and entered warmly into the quarrel, employing Roberto di Sanseverino, who was disposable and on the look out for work, as his General. The King of Naples seeing himself thus attacked in a manner which the rapidly spreading disaffection among his vassals rendered very dangerous, applied to Milan,—that is to say, to Ludovico il Moro,—and to Florence,—that is to say, to Lorenzo de' Medici,—for assistance.

There was no reason whatever that should have moved the Florentine community to take any part in this quarrel. If they did so at all, it ought rather to have been on the other side. But Lorenzo de' Medici had, of course, sympathies with a despot engaged in crushing all possibility of resistance to his power. One good turn deserves another. And Lorenzo was quite aware that the day might come,

A.D. 1486. when either he or his might be very glad of similar help from the King of Naples. So the Florentines, somewhat unwillingly, sent the required aid,—unwillingly, for they found it hard, as the historian says, to leave their own affairs,—the recovery of Sarzana, that is to say,—for the sake of fighting in quarrels which were none of theirs. The Venetians and the Genoese sided with the Pope. And thus the greed and oppression of the King of Naples once again plunged Italy into a war, which was carried on chiefly on the territory of Naples, and in the neighbourhood of Rome during the remainder of that year, and the first part of 1486.

But, like so many of the Italian wars of that century, the struggle was productive of nothing save the destruction and desolation of the country. No notable battles were fought, and no decisive results attained. The King of Naples, however, became aware that the Pope was engaged in preparing a new means of attack, so dangerous as to make him extremely desirous of peace. There was still a pretender to the crown of Naples in France, René, Duke of Lorraine, the inheritor of the rights and claims of the House of Anjou. And Innocent was stirring up Charles VIII. of France to send this pretender into Italy for the maintenance of his claim, assuring him as usual, that that was the favourable moment, and that the Holy Father could insure to the Angevine party a large amount of support in the kingdom of Naples.

Old King Ferdinand was wise enough to be anxious for peace at the first menace of this danger. He promised all the Pope asked him without any difficulty; nothing doubting, that if he could only succeed in inducing His Holiness to abandon the cause of the great vassals in revolt against him, he should find, as Muratori says, little difficulty in afterwards cutting down the tall poppy-heads in his kingdom at leisure. So he promised to pay the annual tribute to the Holy See, which had been such a long-standing

subject of heartburning and dispute between Naples and the Papal court; agreed that Aquila should be a free city; and granted a free pardon and amnesty to all those of his subjects who had been in arms against him. A.D. 1486.

On these terms peace was made on the 11th of August.* On the 13th of the same month the first executions for the gratification of the King's vengeance, in contravention of the terms signed only a few hours before, took place; Aquila was very shortly afterwards reduced to complete obedience;† and the Pope did not get his tribute any better paid than before.

Nor did Florence observe the terms which had been agreed upon, any better. It had been wished, when the conditions of the peace between Rome and Naples were being settled, to make the opportunity serve for arranging the only other outstanding quarrel which was at that time disturbing the tranquillity of Italy, that between Florence and Genoa, concerning Sarzana. Various attempts at negotiation on this subject had been made, chiefly by the Pope, previously to the outbreak of the war with Naples. But it had been found impossible to reconcile the pretensions of the two claimants. Florence especially, as Ammirato tells us, would not hear of permitting anybody else, even the Holy Father himself, to settle her affairs for her. Now, the conference which had included this little matter in the arrangements for the general peace, had undertaken

* Macchiavelli says, at the end of August. Ammirato, lib. xxv. Gonf. 1172, and Muratori, ad ann. give the date in the text.

† The results of this short, and disgracefully unprincipled war,—unprincipled alike on the part of all those who partook in it,—were very permanently and fatally influential in determining the unhappy future of Neapolitan history.—"Il re . . . di poi voltosi a rassetare le cose sue, non avendo quasi ostaculo degli inimici, perchè erano abbandonati, gli spacciò tutti, e si fece così intero ed assoluto signore di quel regno, come ne fussi stato alcuno altro gran tempo inanzi, in modo che gli fù imputato a felicità l' avere avuta questa guerra, per avergli data occasione di assicurarsi de' Baroni."—See Guicciardini, scititi inediti, vol. iii. p. 76.

A.D. 1486. that Florence should keep Pietrasanta, of which she had already taken possession, and that she should relinquish all claim to Sarzana and Sarzanella. And Florence had also agreed to the general conditions of the peace; but with as little intention of resting content with the arrangement thus made for her as the King of Naples had of keeping the promises he had given.

Nor did any of the parties to the treaty trouble themselves to insist on the observation of its provisions by the Florentines in the matter of Sarzana and the Genoese, any more than they did to interfere between the King of Naples and the gratification of his vengeance on the barons who had revolted against him. The Holy Father, indeed, continued his endeavours to mediate between the two Republics. But his efforts, though inspired by a very different spirit, from the attempts which he had made with the same view before the breaking out of the war in Naples, were equally unsuccessful. All his proposals had at that time been rejected by the Florentines. But after the conclusion of the peace, a change had come over the Pontiff's mind with respect to Florence, and the Sovereign, whom the Florentines persisted in calling a private citizen, and who was wise enough to fall in with their humour and accept his part in the farce, by professing to be such. The Pope had a son, one Francesco Cibo. And though Innocent generally was pacific in temper and policy, and, perhaps it is fair to add, though some greater degree of conscientious appreciation of the duties of his position, together with the circumstances of the times, prevented him from setting about the work of founding and aggrandizing a family on the same scale and with the same vigour that his predecessor Sixtus had done, yet "desiring to honour him (his son) with power and friends, so that he might retain them after his (the Pope's) death, he did not know in all Italy any one with whom he could more advantageously make an

alliance for him, than with Lorenzo de' Medici." So says Macchiavelli, evidently thinking that Innocent's judgment was a shrewd and sound one in this matter. And thus our private citizen, our "head-man," as we venture to call him, not to offend the ears of the most republican of republicans by any more courtly term, the great-grandson of douce old John the banker, who did not want to hear of any innovations in Florence, but thought for his part that rich and poor ought to be taxed with equal fairness, and who meantime carefully attended himself to the adding of florin to florin,—this our magnificent Lorenzo had brought matters to such a pass that a reigning Pope thought the best thing he could do for his son was to tack him on to the skirts of the Medici. A.D. 1486.

Lorenzo did not wait to be asked twice. So it was arranged that the Pope's son Francesco should marry Maddalena, the daughter of Lorenzo de' Medici.

The Vicar of Christ gave a touching and fatherly benediction to the interesting couple; and forthwith took a far more enlightened view of the dispute between Florence and Genoa respecting Sarzana. But, as before the former city had rejected his good offices, now Genova la Superba refused all proposals with equal obstinacy. So Florence was obliged once again to gird up her loins for the recovery of her dependencies by force.

She sought the assistance of her allies, the King of Naples and the Duke of Milan. But the first excused himself under pretext of the necessity of holding all his disposable force ready to repel any attack of the Turks; while the second,—that is to say Ludovico Il Moro, his uncle, on his behalf, since the grandson of the great general and usurper Francesco Sforza remained a mere puppet in his uncle's hands,—made promises which he did not keep. But Florence, not unaccustomed, as Macchiavelli remarks, to find herself deserted by her friends in the hour of her

A.D. 1487. need, only put her own shoulder to the wheel with the more determined effort. And the result was that in the following summer the Republic, after having taken Sarzanella as the result of a successful battle a few days previously, got possession of Sarzana also by capitulation on the 22nd of June, 1487.

And now once again all Italy was at peace. And "the Republic, to the notable increase of the reputation of Lorenzo de' Medici, who had been present at the surrender of Sarzana, had repose from all trouble after this war. And all the Princes of Italy congratulated him on the ending of it: in such sort that he being thus free from all disturbances abroad, and having perfect quietude at home, and giving himself up entirely to comfort, and to the elegancies of peace, busied himself in engaging the services of literary men, in accumulating books, in beautifying the city, in rendering the lands around it fertile, and, in a word, in all those pursuits and studies, which caused that age to be deemed preeminently prosperous."*

Prosperous indeed! Halcyon days, the glory of which may be seen yet shining with roseate hue in the optimist pages of Roscoe and other dazzled admirers of the Medicean splendour.

It was splendour, however, by which no student of history or observer of social phenomena should have been dazzled. For the symptoms of unsoundness in that glittering prosperity, the evidences that the surface brilliance of it was but as the phosphorescent light, that may be seen to float above the putrescent remains of organic matter in process of dissolution, were as numerous and quite as striking as the glitter of what has been mistaken for prosperity. It may be assumed, that a conviction of the hollowness and deceptiveness of all appearances of national

* Ammirato, lib. xxv. Gonf. 1178.

prosperity, however flattering and plausible, which are co- A.D. 1487.
incident with a decay of civil liberty, has in the English mind attained the position of an unimpeachable axiom. Whether the phenomenon be exhibited under the rule of a Divus Augustus, of a magnificent Lorenzo, or of a Grand Monarque, who could boast that in his person was centred all the power and vitality of the social body he ruled, an Englishman knows what the next turn of the leaf in the historian's record has in store for him; and he comprehends the connection and relationship to each other in the events of this frequently recurring series, sufficiently well to be assured, that what has been in this matter will be again,—that the wonted result will follow the perfectly intelligible cause. And were it not that what the world is now witnessing in a neighbouring country would seem to warrant the supposition, it might be thought unjustifiable egotism to imagine that the lesson which has been thus read to Europe, had been learned only by ourselves.

Now in those halcyon days, which witnessed the magnificence of Lorenzo, the grandson of Cosmo, and great-grandson of Giovanni de' Medici, the banker, civil liberty had altogether perished in the community, which had been in so special a manner its peculiar home, which had done and suffered so much (whether intelligently or not) for the preservation of it, and which had deemed all things and all considerations secondary to it in value. Liberty had perished in Florence, not by a sudden blow. Florentine freedom had been attacked by such, as in the case of the Duke of Athens, and had successfully resisted and recovered from the attack. The domestic traitors, who had succeeded in reducing their country to servitude, had proceeded more cunningly and cautiously. "It is in the nature of states, the government of which is in the hands of a few,"—says Guicciardini, putting the words into the mouth of Pagolo Antonio Soderini in that remarkable dialogue on the

A.D. 1490. Government of Florence, which has been recently published for the first time from the original manuscript;*—it is in the nature of such states "to become continually more and more despotic in their constitution; and it is inevitable that the power of a tyrant should be continually increased by the consequences of the evils, which proceed from his tyranny. Consider the progress of Cosmo; and ask how much greater his power was at the end of his life than it was at the beginning of '34. Lorenzo in his turn succeeded to a more absolute power than Cosmo had wielded. And in the latter years of his life he was in every respect a more complete despot than he had been in the years immediately subsequent to the death of his father. And at the time of his own death he was daily pushing his absolutism to greater completeness."

These assertions are put by the great historian and statesman into the mouth of an eminent and consistent constitutionalist, and consequent enemy to the Medici. But the reader of the foregoing pages is well aware that Soderini said no more than the truth as regards the progress of Florentine history up to the point we have reached. And the proofs are abundant that Lorenzo was, during these years of profound peace, which were the last of his life, busily and successfully engaged in removing the last shadows of the old guarantees of constitutional liberty. Many matters still required, we are told, "reformation" in the government of the city. The last regulation had placed the nomination of the Signory, that is to say all the legislative and almost all the executive power of the State, in the hands of a body of seventy, themselves appointed, of course, in conformity with the will of "those in power,"—"*di chi governava,*" as the Florentine writers of this period are wont to designate the rulers of the still so-called re-

* See Opere Inedite di Francesco Guicciardini, vol. ii. p. 46.

public. But even this shadowy bulwark against the immediate operation of despotic power was found too troublesome to be tolerated. The "Seventy" were abolished, and "Accoppiatori" named, with authority to appoint the Signory at their pleasure, "so that the power might be concentrated in fewer hands." * Nor was even this enough to satisfy Lorenzo's ever increasing appetite for the complete possession of absolute and uncontrolled power. "Inasmuch as it seemed desirable to him," writes Guicciardini in the same invaluable fragment on the Florentine history of this period, which has been so recently brought to light, "inasmuch as it seemed desirable to re-arrange many matters in the government of the city, with reference to the mode of creating the magistrates, with regard to the taxes, and the public funds, and the customs, *in order to avoid the embarrassment and trouble of passing bills, and the voting of the Councils,* the requisite authority and power for the doing of what was desired, was given to seventeen citizens, who were authorized to dispose of everything in and with reference to the city, as completely and unrestrictedly as it was competent to the entire people of Florence to do." The seventeen citizens, it is hardly necessary to add, consisted of Lorenzo himself and a knot of his closest friends and creatures. A.D. 1490.

In this dialogue on the Government of Florence by Guicciardini, Bernardo del Nero, one of the speakers, who was a partisan of the Medici, and into whose mouth Guicciardini puts all that could be urged in their favour, delivers himself as follows:—

"It is not difficult to state in a few words, what was the nature of the government of the Medici. For it is impossible to deny the truth of what Piero Guicciardini † has

* Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, Opere inedite, vol. iii. p. 80.

† The father of Francesco, the historian, and writer of the dialogue from

A.D. 1490. been saying, that it was a power usurped by party violence and by force. Nay, it must be confessed, though he was too courteous to say as much in direct terms, that it was a tyrannical government; and that although the city retained the name and show of freedom, the Medici none the less domineered over it and were the masters of it, inasmuch as the magistracies were given to whomsoever they chose, and those who held them obeyed their every word."

The apologist for the Medici goes on to urge that, though undeniably tyrants and usurpers, they were excellent rulers in comparison with others of the same kind. "They did much good and little evil, *except such as they were driven to do by the necessity of their position.* It was their will to be masters of the government, but to be so with as well regulated a civil government * as was consistent with that determination, and with humanity and moderation. And I think that this was due mainly to their native good disposition, for it cannot be denied that they came of a good race, and were of very noble natures."

The apology, which contents itself with the assertion that the objects of it did as little evil as was consistent with the necessities of their position, is very curiously illustrative of the tone of feeling and moral sentiment of the period, and helps to throw light on the mental stand-point which Macchiavelli may be supposed to have occupied when

which the passage in the text is taken. In his introduction to the dialogue, Francesco Guicciardini assures us that "there will be in this discourse nothing whatever of my own invention or judgment. The whole will be a sincere and faithful narration of that which was in time past discoursed by our wisest and most influential citizens: discourses which I have thought good to preserve in writing as they were related to me by my father, who was one of the speakers."—Opere inedite, vol. ii. p. 4.

* "Con quantu più civilità è stato possibile." The use of the phrase "civilità," the sense of which is as rendered in the text, is worth noting. "*Civilità*," or "civiltà," in the writers of this period meant free civic government in contradistinction to "tyranny," *i. e.*, the government of an absolute prince.

writing his "Prince." He that wills the end, wills the means to that end. He that will be a "Prince," (bearing in mind what that title was supposed by the citizen of an Italian mediæval republic to imply) must do thus and thus. And those who are content to be ruled by a Prince must expect that he should so act. To hope or wish to maintain the position of a Prince, or absolute ruler, without being guilty of such and such evil actions, is, in the opinion of these Italian mediæval statesmen, an absurdity and a contradiction. The Prince must do that evil which the necessity of his position demands, as Bernardo del Nero admits that the Medici did, and must needs have done. The gist of a great part of Macchiavelli's argument and teaching would have been lost, if he had insisted largely on the wickedness or evil disposition of him who would occupy the position of a Prince, or despotic ruler. The point of the lesson is not that a bad man, being a Prince, will commit such enormities, but that any man, of however good a natural disposition he may be, must commit them if he will be a Prince. It is in the nature of things, in the fatality of the position, that the absolute ruler of his fellow citizens must act so and so. It may arise possibly from the fault of the governed as from that of the governor; but we have nothing to do here with the investigation of the moral question,—only of the political question. Such a mode of rule involves such and such results. And there the teacher stops. For there were abundant reasons in the circumstances of the times, when Macchiavelli was writing his "Prince," to make it undesirable for him to proceed to draw the conclusion, that since such was the case, it were well for mankind not to permit themselves to be ruled by any such scheme of polity. And surely he may be justified in thinking that it was not necessary to the enlightenment of his readers to draw formally so very evident an inference.

A.D. 1490.

A.D. 1490. In the subsequent part of Guicciardini's dialogue, Piero Capponi and Pagolantonio Soderini, Bernardo's opponents, accept his statement, and do not attempt to show that the Medici did (much) more evil than was needed by their position; but set forth at large how very great that necessary quantity of evil was. They also, in obedience to that peculiarly objective tendency of the Italian mind, which led the old statesmen and historians to examine what was, rather than what ought to be, and to consider what was the best, wisest, and most prudent arrangement of human affairs, on the hypothesis that mankind are moved by such and such passions, rather than to discuss the degree of moral blame due to those who are so moved, or to speculate on the possibility of eliminating the action of the passions in question, set themselves to exhibit, not the moral badness, the baseness, or hatefulness of the criminals they are arraigning, but simply the extreme undesirableness of a state of things which produces such results.

Suppose a story to be told of some trust bestowed in implicit confidence, and betrayed, to the ruin of him who trusted in his friend. The first movement of the more subjective northern mind, on hearing such a tale, would be one of moral indignation and detestation against the betrayer. The first and most spontaneous movement of the Italian intellect would be to draw from the narrative a warning never to repose confidence in any man. Where the northern mind kicks against the moral evil, refuses to submit to it, instinctively struggles towards its abolition and extinguishment, and insists on looking forward to the state of things when it shall have been got rid of,—the southern—or how far ought one possibly to say rather the Roman Catholic?—mental diathesis is content to admit its existence, is disposed to recognize it as the result of eternal laws, to contemplate it with the same impassible philosophy with which the physician regards physical evil, and

to arrange matters for the best, not by extirpating it, but by removing opportunity for its actively mischievous operation. Men under such and such circumstances acted in such and such a manner, write the old Italian historians, with impassive calm. Wretches! monsters! exclaims the northern moralist. Such things must be put down! What were their antecedents? what their education? what their religion?—Pooh, pooh! rejoins the Italian student of mankind; all such talk is merely useless. What men have done, men will do again. Such is the nature of the creature, and the law of things. And the lesson to be learned from the record is not how to change man's will, but how best to take away the opportunity for its action. A.D. 1490.

Those who are conversant with the writings of the Italian moralists and casuists, as well as with those of the great historians and statists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, will, I think, recognize the justice of the above attempt to describe the mental stand-point from which they are wont to contemplate human action, and the motives from which it springs; and an acquaintance with and recognition of this habit of mind will avail much towards explaining that curiously cold and passionless tone of the Italian historians which strikes so strangely and jarringly on an English ear, and towards solving the much debated question of the spirit in which the great Florentine statist wrote his sphynx-like "Prince."

But it is to be observed that the prevalence of such a tone of thought, not only among the philosophers and statesmen of the period, but among the great body of the citizens, on whose conduct and character the political destinies of Florence depended, tended very materially in fact to the loss of that liberty, which the Medici contrived to suppress to their own profit, as their contemporaries believed and felt. Had every Florentine of mark felt on the subject as Milton or as Hampden would have felt,

A.D. 1490. Cosmo could never have "fathered" his country as he did, nor would Lorenzo have been so "Magnificent" had they felt, not that the question between the Medici and the Florentines was a game at which the former had won and the latter lost, but that the position into which they had been allowed to thrust themselves was an unmitigated evil to all alike. Had they burned with the indignation of him to whom tyranny is an abomination, instead of with the spite of men who have been unfairly jockeyed in running for a prize; had they comprehended that the cunning Medici, whose "prudence" is the subject of the perpetual and unanimous eulogies in the mouths of all their contemporaries, were achieving unmixed ill for all parties concerned, that they were doing even worse mischief for themselves than that which they inflicted on their subjects, that the evil done by them "because it was a necessity of their position," was no more excusable or less odious on that account than if it had been perpetrated in utter wantonness, that the worst and most detestable evil of all was *the wish* to become the despots of their country, —then liberty would have been truly loved at Florence, and her citizens would not have been so easily deprived of it.

But liberty was neither understood aright nor prized for its own sake at Florence, and therefore it perished. Hear the testimony of Guicciardini, as put by him into the mouth of Bernardo del Nero at a later page of the dialogue that has remained so long unpublished, on the real feeling of the Florentine citizens on this point. "It seems clear to me," says the old philosopher and statesman, "if I do not deceive myself, that the desire of domination and of possessing superiority over their fellows is so natural to men, that, as a general rule, those are few indeed in number who really love liberty so well that if they had the opportunity of making themselves lords or masters of their fellow

citizens, they would not seek to do so. . . . If then you will consider attentively the conduct of those who live together in one and the same city, and will observe the dissensions which arise among them, you will find that the object in view is superiority over each other rather than liberty. . . . Thus those who fill the foremost social positions in a city do not strive after liberty, but are ever seeking to increase their own power, and to insure their own superiority and pre-eminence. They endeavour, indeed, as far as is in their power, to conceal their ambition under this plausible name of liberty; because, inasmuch as there are in any city many more who fear to be oppressed than those are who can hope to become oppressors, he has many more adherents, who seems to stand forward as the champion of equality, than he who should openly aim at superiority."* A.D. 1490.

The whole course of Florentine history testifies to the truth of the assertions here put into the mouth of the old Medicean partisan. During the four hundred years of a history, which is almost that of a perpetual revolution, no attempt can be traced to secure any of the most ordinary guarantees of individual freedom. The constant aim and object in all the ever-recurring constitutional changes was the settlement of the question, who should be admitted to share in the desirable privilege of tyrannically governing the general body of the society.

How utterly every principle of real liberty was lost sight of by the citizens of "the most republican of republics," is placed in a strong light by considering a feature of the Florentine system, which, from its always having been regarded by their own writers so much as a matter of course as to call for no special reference to it, has not met with that notice from modern writers which it

* Del reggimento di Firenze.—Opere inedite di Guicciardini, vol. ii. p. 51.

A.D. 1490. abundantly deserves. At the period from which this narrative takes its commencement; in the days which Dante deemed the golden age of the Florentine commonwealth; when the frontiers of the territory subject to the city were fixed at a mile or so from its walls, the object and ambition of the infant community was to be a self-governing society. The subjects of the civic government were the citizens of Florence themselves. But at a very early date, as we have seen, these frontiers began to be pushed farther and ever farther back to a greater distance from the city walls. And the citizens of Florence began to have under their rule subjects, who were not citizens. In the early periods of this increase of territory, these new subjects must have consisted wholly of persons belonging to the lowest, poorest, most ignorant and most helpless of the then existing classes of society:—the tillers of the soil: mere hewers of wood and drawers of water;—a caste far inferior, according to the notions of the time and country, to the lowest grades of the city population. The feudal lords of these poor pariahs, when attacked and vanquished by the citizens in the pursuance of their "manifest destiny," either became Florentine citizens to all intents and purposes, or, to all Florentine intents and purposes, outlaws. And it never entered into the conception of any of the parties concerned, that these poor peasants,—these *contadini*, deemed to be of but little more account than the bullocks, their fellow labourers of the soil—should dream of sharing in the majesty or the power of the sovereign community of Florence.

But back went the Florentine frontiers farther and ever farther, as we know, enclosing a ceaselessly increasing territory, comprising towns, large towns even, which had themselves been sovereigns, not only of themselves, but also of *contadini*-peopled strips of surrounding territory. And all these people, townsmen and countrymen alike,

became subjects of the sovereign Commonwealth, and not fellow sharers in its sovereignty. At last Florentine territory came to comprise within its limits, as we have seen, a city older, and once far richer and more powerful than itself. Imperial Pisa, whose citizens had once upon a time talked of the Florentines as the Arabs of their inland mountains, became subject to the Commonwealth of Florence. But still the old order of things was maintained. Nor does it seem to have ever occurred to any one of the victors or the vanquished that it could, should, or might be otherwise. The Pisans in losing their sovereignty lost their freedom as a matter of course. They became subjects of the Florentines, and subjects very oppressively governed, without any voice whatsoever in the management of their own concerns. A.D. 1490.

It was the old Roman municipal theory of social constitution, so wonderfully indestructible in the minds and instincts of the Italian people,—the *civis Romanus* idea,—which ruled the arrangement of these relations between the conquering and the conquered city. And all the ideas and social notions and arrangements of the Italians to the present day are impregnated with the old deeply rooted persuasion of the wideness of the social interval which separates the citizen from the *contadino*.

It thus came to pass that the Florentine citizen of the latter ages of the Commonwealth was no longer, even in theory, a member of a free nation. He was, even according to the most largely democratical Florentine conceptions, a member of a ruling oligarchy, whose dealings with its subjects were absolutely autocratic. The entirety of the conviction, that this relative position of Florence towards her dependencies was according to the proper and natural order of things,—the naïve unconsciousness that any different arrangement could be demanded in the name of those principles of liberty, of which at all events the liberalizing party at Florence conceived themselves to be the champions, is

A.D. 1490. very strikingly exhibited in a passage of the above-quoted dialogue by Guicciardini. Pagolantonio Soderini, the opponent of the Medici, and supporter, in opposition to their rule, of a "free" government, in urging the various crimes of which the Medici had been guilty against the liberties of their country, speaks of the practice, adopted by them in common with other tyrants, of having about them in positions of authority people of low degree, mere creatures of their own;—"base persons," he says, "of very inferior position, and for the most part *our own subjects*. And yet it was necessary for any citizen who had business to transact to treat these people with deference, and pay them the respect due to superiors. And this, besides being excessively disgusting to any one who has no taste for being domineered over by people who ought to be his own subjects,* is mischievous to the state. For our affairs are thus placed in the hands of people who are our enemies, or at the least, who have no love for us. And so the secrets and private interests of all of us have to pass every day through the hands of such people, and to become better known to them than to ourselves."†

It would be impossible for any member of the most exclusive aristocracy to express more fully the feeling, which any proposal to confer political equality on the masses of the people would inspire. And no further proof can be needed that there did not exist in Florence one spark of that real love for freedom in the abstract,—the love which values the liberty of others as fully as our own,—which alone could have imparted to the Florentines the union and the energy needful for the preservation of their self-government.

Nevertheless, though Florence had evidently and unde-

* "Di chi doverrebbe servire."

† Dialogo del reggimento di Firenze.—Opere inedite di F. Guicciardini, vol. ii. p. 47.

niably fallen under that "governo di un solo," which it had been the main object of all her politicians and political arrangements to avoid, yet those last years of the life of Lorenzo were marked by a specious and glittering appearance of prosperity, which attracted the admiration of the contemporary Italian states, and even of foreign nations, which contented the majority of the Florentines themselves, and which has been recorded in the pages of the contemporary historians, and copied from them by all subsequent writers. And there was perhaps a sufficiently plausible outward show of prosperity to excuse the contemporaries of Lorenzo for admitting the vain imagination that a political millennium had been reached, which brought with it such blessings of all sorts, as not only compensated for the loss of liberty, but showed that political freedom was after all a less desirable thing than their forefathers had been wont to fancy it. The contemporaries of Lorenzo might have been excused for thinking this, for they had not had the frequent repetition of the lesson that has taught thinkers of the nineteenth century to know of a surety that all such appearances of prosperity are deceptive, and certain to lead to downfall and degradation. A.D. 1490.

"The city," says Guicciardini, speaking of this period in the recently published fragment of Florentine history,* —"the city was in profound peace; the citizens who had the government in their hands were united and closely bound together; and their power was so well established that no man dared to lift his voice against it. The people were regaled every day with spectacles, with festivals and novelties. They were well fed from the plenty of all the necessaries of life, with which the city abounded. Industry of every sort was thriving and in full employment. Ingenious and able† men were maintained, and a welcome

* Opere inedite, vol. iii. p. 82.

† "Uomini ingeniosi e *virtuosi*." Here we have the latter word, not yet

A.D. 1490. and honourable position secured to all professors of literature, art, and every liberal pursuit. And lastly, the city was not only in a condition of the most perfect quiet and tranquillity within the walls, but was glorious abroad, and enjoyed the highest reputation among the people of other states. Many circumstances contributed to assure to Florence at that time this high position. It had a strong government, and a man of exceedingly great authority at the head of it. It had recently increased its territory.* It had been in a great degree the cause first of the salvation of the Duchy of Ferrara, and afterwards of the King of Naples. It had paramount influence with Pope Innocent.. It was allied with Naples and with Milan, and in fact may be considered to have been the balancing power of all Italy."

Yes! this was all true. But modern writers should nevertheless not have been dazzled by this delusive brilliancy, or induced to bless when they should have cursed by the sight of full flesh-pots, or by the reflected flattery of the caresses bestowed on men of their own order. Economists as well as moralists must shake the head at that "panem et Circenses," the debauching effects of which on the national character have never since been effaced; while the immediate result of the system was to assist in so impoverishing the magnificent Lorenzo himself as to compel him (in the commission of only so much evil as his position made unavoidable) to appropriate by various frauds the public money to his own use. The world has well learned by this time to estimate at its true worth the value to mankind of that court-bred and court-fed literature, which Princes, who trample out the liberties of their country, deem "safe;"—the dilettante philology encou-

quite signifying, but on its way to signify, the meaning attached to it, when it became a cant term among ourselves.

* Alluding to the conquest of Pietrosanta, and Sarzana.

raging men to busy their minds about words to the exclusion of more dangerous thoughts about things; the speculative philosophy, which forms so admirably safe and amusing a mental exercitation, as long as its circle is kept sufficiently distant in time or place to obviate all possibility of touching "actualities;" and above all, the "elegant" literary immoralities, which serve, not only to divert men's minds from serious thought, but to render them unfitted and incapable for evermore for meddling with the interests, duties, and occupations of a free citizen. The world knows all this now too well;—or it might study in the literature of the "virtuosi" of Lorenzo's "academic" circle, the nature of the different kinds of intellectual produce which thrive in the atmosphere of despotic courts. A.D. 1490

But the modern world, and especially the English world, has been wont to picture to itself the epoch of Lorenzo the Magnificent as one of surpassing brilliancy and glory in art. The great and unrivalled masters of the art of so nobly and yet so truthfully representing the human form, and human action and passion, that their works are not only a testimony to future ages of the nobility of the social life which produced them, but are also ever-enduring sermons and lessons in true nobility to the men of every subsequent generation, those "old masters," whose productions are still referred to as the indisputable canon and authority for all that is greatest and highest in art, are vaguely and generally supposed to belong to "the Medicean era." And they are imagined or rather felt to have cast the undying glory of their names on the memories of those culminating Medici, whose reputation as the magnificent patrons of all liberal culture, seems to entitle them so naturally and fitly to that honour.

But chronology,—an exact and uncourtier-like science,—has its word to say on this matter. The Magnificent

A.D. 1490. Lorenzo was born in 1448, and died in 1492. Now let us compare the dates at which some of the greatest of the really great ones were making their immortality. Fra Beato, from 1447 * to 1455—Masaccio, from 1420 to 1443—Brunellesco, from 1400 to 1446—Ghiberti, from 1400 to 1455—Donatello, from 1420 to 1468—Filippo Lippi, from 1456 to 1469—Ghirlandaio, from 1474 to 1495—Botticelli, from 1460 to 1515. It is clear that Medicean courtly patronage contributed nothing towards the production or "fostering" of these men and their works. But there were great names, it may be urged, after these, which do truly belong to the Medicean era, and who did assuredly profit, directly or indirectly, by Medicean patronage of art. Such was undoubtedly the fact. It is in no wise necessary to the support of the proposition, that political tyranny and the loss of liberty are always fatal to high art, to deny that such was the case. In the first place, were this a fitting occasion for such a discussion, it would be easy to show, that in the work of the artists of the truly Medicean period, excellent as they must be admitted to have been in their art, there are already visible the germs of that lamentable decay, which very shortly after the complete establishment of despotism became so marked as to be universally recognized as notorious. And in the next place, it is of course not pretended that the successful destruction of a nation's liberties by an usurper has the *immediate* effect of suppressing and destroying all noble intellectual effort and the products of it in the nation so scourged. Of course the poison works more slowly. The old traditions for awhile remain alive. Men are in a great measure what the fathers and mothers, who lived in a better time, have made

* The first date in each instance indicates loosely the period of "flourishing," the latter date that of the artist's death, which is the important point for our purpose.

them. The intellectual life of a nation fallen under despotism dies surely, but by a process analogous to atrophy, and not by sudden stroke. A.D. 1490.

The phenomena indeed of the subject, which have been unhappily reproduced in the world's history sufficiently often to admit of the laws connecting their causes and effects to be understood with sufficient accuracy, would seem to show that an epoch of transition from liberty to political servitude may enjoy some advantages, in respect of art illustration, of a nature peculiar to such a transitional time. Wealth loves to surround itself with adornment. The prince of a brilliant court is not insensible to the ornament of art. His art, like his literature, indeed, must, and assuredly will, be "safe" in quality. But that point secured, splendid sovereigns are wont to be generous patrons of art; and artists must live. Like other mortals, they are sensible to reward and praise. Patronage does and must stimulate art-productions. The reason why the noblest art cannot be had except in a free community is not because the artist is such a patriot or lover of liberty, that he will not work for a tyrant's pay. No doubt any one of the great men, whose names have been cited above, would have been glad enough of the Medicean patronage. But the reason for the decay of art under a despotism is, that artists, like other men, are the product of the life around them; and when that is ignoble, the mind that can produce noble art is not itself produced. It comes to pass, therefore, that such an epoch as that of Lorenzo de' Medici has, in the matter of art illustration, the advantages proper to two different states of society, advantages which except at such a period of social transition would be altogether incompatible;—the advantages derived from the possession of a generation of artists, the product of a nobler and better time, and the advantages resulting from the material stimulus and protection that wealth in masses

A.D. 1490. only can give. Let but the generation which witnesses the transition pass away, and let princely wealth be left to do its utmost in the way of patronage alone, and the utter powerlessness of it to call forth such works as it had at first stolen the heritage of from a better and happier day, will be at once as lamentably apparent, as the world has ever hitherto seen it to be.

It is often supposed by many of those who are aware that none of the higher graces and gifts of human nature can be expected to flourish under the heel of a despotism, that a condition of mere material prosperity is not so wholly incompatible with that form of government. And supposing the despot to possess some modicum of economical enlightenment, it may be conceded that the material interests of a community may for a time prosper under a despotic rule. For a time only, because, although it may be the sincere desire of an absolute sovereign that his subjects should become rich, and although he may adapt his economical legislation judiciously to the affording them the opportunities of becoming so, yet his enlightened commercial and financial legislation will, in the long run, fail to produce the results that might, under other circumstances, be expected from it, because other portions of his legislation will have killed the qualities in his subjects which are needed for the successful prosecution of industry and enterprise. Habits of self-reliance and independent action are not found to be common among the subjects of paternal governments. The development of that virile vigour which is needed for the achievement of success in any career of effort and struggle, cannot take place in men whose due development has been stunted in other directions. It may appear that the intellectual atmosphere generated by the existence of a free press is not absolutely necessary to the successful accumulation of wealth; but it is nevertheless true that a condition

of society which prevents the free action of intelligence in any and every direction will soon be found to have been also fatal to the social and intellectual qualities which mark the communities in which great mercantile careers have been common. A.D. 1490.

And already, in the time of Lorenzo, the great commercial prosperity of Florence was on the wane. It was a time of magnificent spending rather than of thrifty earning. The vast commercial enterprises which the industry and talent for business of Lorenzo's grandfather, Cosmo, had carried on with a success that more than supplied this enormous expenditure, fell to decay, and almost to ruin, under the Magnificent Lorenzo. He was himself wholly devoid of any knowledge of commercial or banking affairs, and had neither the taste nor the industry needed for the acquiring it. The distant commercial establishments in Milan, Lyons, Bruges, and other cities, which in his grandfather's time had been as suckers, pouring the wealth of those countries in a rich stream into the Medicean coffers, became in Lorenzo's hands, and in consequence of being entrusted to incapable and dishonest agents, so many occasions of loss. Hence one of "the necessities of his position" constrained him to divert the public moneys to his own private use. A bank in Florence, in which he was interested, would have failed in 1478 had he not decreed that all the payments to the army engaged in the war that Florence was then waging with Pope Sixtus and the King of Naples, should be made at this bank, where the operation was so managed that the bank made fully eight per cent. on all payments, which was in fact a direct robbery of the State; for the mercenary captains, as Guicciardini explains, finding themselves thus mulcted in the payment for the troops they had contracted to supply, made it up to themselves by bringing into the field so many fewer men; and the Signory in its turn was forced to supply the

A.D. 1490. deficiency thus caused by fresh bargains for more soldiers.*

Such was the government under which Florence—all that Florence which dared to speak its thoughts—considered herself to have at last found tranquillity, repose, and prosperity! Might it not be supposed that we had already reached the term of this narrative; that the final catastrophe had arrived, and that the wavering light of Florentine liberty was already extinguished? But the end was not quite yet. Fatally imperfect and erroneous as was the ideal of liberty which had prevailed in Florence, it had struck its roots too deeply, and into too strong a soil to be eradicated and destroyed without a series of convulsive death-struggles, which, bearing as they do the impress of a real heroism, that might have been supposed scarcely compatible with the degree of corruption into which the city had already fallen, bring the epic of Florentine story to a close with a truly tragic solemnity of action.

* Storia Fiorentina. Opere inedite, vol. iii. p. 87.

CHAPTER IV.

A serious accident happens at Florence—The death of Lorenzo—Omens and portents—Medical science of the time—Pietro Lione, the physician of Spoleto—His fate—Villa of Carreggi—Lorenzo on his deathbed—His dissatisfaction with his confessors—He sends for Savonarola—Interview between Lorenzo and the Friar—Accounts of this interview—Three crimes confessed by Lorenzo—The reply of Savonarola—Impenitence of Lorenzo—Savonarola refuses to give him absolution—Different account given by Poliziano—Incredibility of his statement—Personal appearance of Lorenzo—His intellectual gifts—His friend Luigi Pulci—The "Morgante Maggiore"—Lorenzo as a poet—His manner of life—The "Canti Carnascialeschi"—Lorenzo a representative man—Florentine society of that period—Effect of this on the political condition of Florence—Demoralization of the Florentines a set purpose with the Medici—Lorenzo's interference with the marriage alliances of the Florentines—Permanent results of the demoralization of that day on the subsequent history of Tuscany.

GUICCIARDINI, in the fragment of Florentine history which has been so frequently cited in the last chapter, after speaking of the profound tranquillity and prosperity of the period in question, and of the schemes with which Lorenzo was busy for the further consolidation of his despotism, says that in the midst of all this "an accident occurred which diametrically changed the whole aspect of things, to the utter confusion not only of the city but of all Italy." The "accident," however, which thus came on the holiday-making city like a sudden thunder-storm on a summer day, making all the basking horizon black with threatening darkness, was one that should not have been beyond the ken of human foresight; for it was no other than the death of that Magnificent Prince, the God who

A.D. 1492. had made all that festal holiday time for the Florentines. It is true that Lorenzo was "cut off in his prime," having been only forty-four years of age at the time of his death; but his cutting-off was not a sudden one. He had been long ill; and it was within the experience even of the fifteenth century that men are specially liable to be cut off in their prime, when that prime has been such as was that of the Magnificent Lorenzo. The physicians, we are told, had not judged his malady to be alarming; or, at all events, they had been too well bred and courtly leeches to hint at any such thunder-clap catastrophe as the premature setting of that magnificent Sun of Florence.

Still Nature did not leave mankind unwarned of the tremendous "accident" that was about to happen to our planet. "The immense importance of this death," Guicciardini tells us, "was indicated by many omens. A comet had appeared a short time previously. Wolves had been heard to howl. A mad woman in Santa Maria Novella had cried out that a bull with horns of fire was burning the whole city. The lions in a menagerie had fought together, and one particularly fine lion had been killed by the others; and, last of all, a few days before Lorenzo's death, the lightning struck the cupola of Santa Reparata,* and caused several very heavy stones to fall, ... and they fell towards the palace of the Medici!"

When matters came to look thus serious, all the resources of the medical art were resorted to for the staving off of the calamity which threatened the world. Those were days when certain medical theories prevailed, which seem to have grown out of the conviction that it was not to be believed that the great ones of the earth, men who had unlimited resources of wealth at their command, should be exposed to the assaults of death even as the

* The cathedral.

common herd; that in this matter of dying, and in that alone, abundant riches should avail nothing. Medicaments, the sole sense and meaning of which lay in the immense costliness which made them unattainable to all save the richest, were deemed of sovereign efficacy. Of course the deathbed of the Magnificent Lorenzo was a fitting scene and occasion for the exertion of the utmost efforts of this department of art. But no distillation sufficiently costly to neutralize the effects of some six-and-twenty years of unbridled profligacy could be hit upon. And it became clear that the comet, and the wolves, and the mad woman, and the lions knew what they meant, and that the terrible "accident" was at hand. In vain Pietro Lione, of Spoleto, the physician of the greatest fame of that day in Italy, was summoned to the bedside of the dying prince. Pietro Lione failed, and failing threw himself in despair into the well of the Villa at Carreggi. That he should have done so was also deemed, as Guicciardini tells us, a notable portent of other strange events to come; . . . . . "although," adds the philosophical historian demurely, "there were some who said that he was thrown in." Be that how it may, there is the old well in the cloistered court-yard at Carreggi still to be seen, with its water gleaming weirdly at the bottom of the darkness, as when it splashed over the unhappy physician's body. But it tells no tales; and no photographing of its shining surface will recall or reveal the reflection that was cast on it from the mouth of the well, as Pietro Lione's body fell. A.D. 1492.

In his pleasant villa of Carreggi, some three miles distant from Florence towards Prato, on the last slopes of the Apennine as they melt into the plain of the Valdarno, in those first spring days of April in the year 1492, Lorenzo the Magnificent lay at length, unmistakably dying. The physicians of the body having thus given up the matter as quite hopeless, it became proper that the

A.D. 1492. physicians of the soul should be summoned to do their office. It was not a religious period, that close of the fifteenth century, and Florence was very far from being a religious city. The Magnificent Prince who was dying, too, was a type of the least religious phase of the society of the place and time. Still Lorenzo was not so wholly lost to every sense of true religious principle, as not to feel that, seeing it had become quite clear that he could live no longer on earth, it behoved him to make his peace with God.

But the dying prince was, as it would seem, tormented by grievous misgivings as to the successful accomplishment of this necessity. The Neo-platonic speculations, which had made these Carreggi halls around him so pleasant,—which had cast around the shades of that "olived Academe" a halo of elegant and philosophic culture, destined to make his name sweet to the "dilettanti" and "virtuosi" of all coming time, had lost their power to charm, and seemed altogether unavailable to any good purpose in his present need. That comfortable doctrine, too, of "the necessities of his position" as a good and sufficient justification for all such portions of his conduct as had not altogether squared with the laws of right and wrong as made for ordinary mortals, did not appear to him at the present conjuncture so all-satisfactory as it seems to an admiring world in the pages of his historians. Many a man of science ere now has, when in the grip of some one of the aches and pains which flesh is heir to, been glad, on finding the appliances of science helpless, to have recourse to some "old woman's remedy," which is found to give relief to the neighbouring gossips. And it must be supposed to have been in a similar spirit that the suffering Platonist turned himself in his extreme need to look for assistance from the old-fashioned popular recipes, to which the vulgar were wont to have recourse in similar straits.

So Lorenzo turned him to the sacraments of the Church. A.D. 1492. And kindly mother Church, loyal as ever to the powers that be, and indulgent as ever to the failings of so wealthy and liberal a penitent, hurried with her shriving tools to the bedside in philosophic Carreggi, abounding in her anxiety to make all things comfortable, and to assure the dying sinner that bygones should be bygones.

But Lorenzo was not comforted, as a truly devout son of the Church ought to have been, by these assurances. The habitual scepticism of a life could not be suddenly got rid of at need. The difficulty does not seem to have arisen from doubts of the doctrinal soundness of the means proposed to him by the Church for contriving that ethical causes and consequences should in his special case be severed from each other, and that the moral degradation of a lifetime should suddenly be found to issue in purity of heart and elevation of feeling. Of all this he pretended to understand nothing; and was content to take the matter on the showing of the professional doctors whose business it was. But he misdoubted the human instruments of these all-remedying sacraments. After all, what were these cowled and surpliced ministers but men, mere men like all the others? And Lorenzo had never in his experience known any man who could be believed and trusted. How could he, who had never put faith in any man, believe these priests, when they told him that they had done their work effectually, and that all would be well with him? Was it likely that they would dare to tell him otherwise? If there was any disagreeable hitch, or painful necessity in the background, would they not hesitate to mention it in such a presence? Of course they would. Who had ever ventured to tell him anything disagreeable to his face? How could it be doubted that these paid priests were flatterers and liars, like all the rest of the men he had ever known? They heard his confessions, and gave him absolu-

A.D. 1492. tion and sacraments of all sorts in the most full, regular, and infallible manner. They fully admitted the cogency of that "necessity of his position" doctrine, and assured him that it was all right. But there was that in the dying man's heart, that would not let him rest satisfied with these assurances. *Was* it all right? That horrible sack of the unhappy city of Volterra! That wide-spread misery! Those ruined families;—those widows and orphans crying to Heaven for vengeance on the man whose private and particular greed and resentment had worked all this woe!

Was it indeed all right now? Those rich alum mines had truly been very necessary for the refilling of the exhausted coffers, the aid of which the exigencies of his position so imperiously required. Still the magnificent prince could not banish from his dying bedside the unfortunate memories of that deed. His philosophic friends were around him. Poliziano remained in close attendance on him; and his favourite Pico della Mirandola strove to soothe and comfort him with his agreeable conversation. But Neo-platonism and philosophic talk about the nature of the soul were found of no avail towards thrusting from the philosopher's soul the ghastly memory of those unhappy maidens, who by this robbery of the funds destined by their families for their portions, had been left to destitution and in many cases to a fate yet worse than that. Could it indeed be that sacraments had availed to smooth away also these dreadful facts, and make them as though they had never been? Was there no mortal man whose words could bring such assurance with them, as should banish these torturing doubts from his mind,—no human voice to whose assertion that his sin was pardoned he could give credence? Yes! one such he hoped there was! Suddenly the thought of Savonarola flashed across his mind. Yes! If the stern uncourtly friar of St. Mark's could tell

him that his sin was forgiven him, he could believe and be at rest. A.D. 1492.

So Fra Girolamo was sent for in all haste to come out to Carreggi. At first the Friar, astonished at such a demand from such a quarter, hesitated to comply with it, fearing that there was no chance that what he could say would be favourably listened to by Lorenzo. But when he was made to understand the condition to which the destroyer of his country's liberties was reduced, and how urgent was his need of spiritual aid, Savonarola immediately set forth on his way to Carreggi.

The interview that followed between those two men, Lorenzo the Magnificent, the usurping destroyer of Florentine liberty, the philosophic sceptic, the licentious poet, the recklessly profligate man of pleasure, the fraudulent banker, the unscrupulous betrayer of the most sacred trusts, then on his dying bed, and the stern friar, whose only worldly thought or interest was a passionate love for that liberty of which the other was the sworn foe, to whose every sentiment, feeling, principle, habitude, the whole life and conduct of Lorenzo was inexpressibly hateful and revolting, —the interview between these two men, I say, was one of the most remarkable that history has recorded. The posthumous flatterers of Lorenzo, the writers bound by hire or by the hope of it to the Medicean interests, and the rose-coloured narratives of the historians, who have followed in their steps, have striven to suppress, deny, or entirely disfigure the accounts of what took place between Savonarola and Lorenzo. It was quite a matter of course that they should do so. Never was a more audacious attempt made to falsify the whole body of history and transmit to future generations a lying record than by the chroniclers of the Medicean glories. And never was such an attempt more signally unsuccessful. In the present case it has been especially so. Of course the interview between the friar and

A.D. 1492. his penitent was a private one. It cannot be imagined that any ears save those of the parties primarily interested heard what passed. The statements which have reached us, therefore, must have been derived either from Lorenzo or from Savonarola. And there is reason to believe, that a similar account was given by both of them. It has reached us by means of the early and contemporary biographers of the friar; but any reader, who is curious to examine for himself the wholly undeniable evidence on which the truth of the following statements rests, will find the entire matter most lucidly discussed and set forth in the very valuable recent work of Pasquale Villari on the "Life and Times of Savonarola." *

Pico della Mirandola was with Lorenzo when the Friar, who had been summoned from Florence, arrived at Carreggi. But on the entrance of the Confessor he left the apartment. Then the dying man, turning to the spiritual guide he had called to him in his need, said that there were three things that lay heavily on his soul, and for the guilt of which he would fain be assured of pardon;—the merciless sack of Volterra; the appropriation to his own purposes of the funds destined for the marriage portions of the daughters of the citizens; and lastly, the shedding of so much innocent blood, and the ruin of so many innocent victims after the conspiracy of the Pazzi.

Lorenzo, while enumerating these things, tortured as he was by remorse, fell into a state of much agitation; and the friar strove to calm him, by reiterated assurances of the goodness and mercy of God.

"But," said he, when Lorenzo had ceased to speak, "three things are necessary before you can hope for the pardon of your sin."

* La Storia di Savonarola, e de' suoi tempi, narrata da Pasquale Villari, con l' ajuto di nuovi documenti. 2 vols. Firenze, 1859. See vol. i., note at the end of chap. ix. p. 155.

"What things, father?" returned Lorenzo, looking up wistfully from his pillow into the monk's hard-featured but compassionate face. A.D. 1492.

Savonarola rose from the chair on which he was sitting by the bedside; and standing drawn up to his full height, prophet-like, in his Dominican's robes, he raised his left hand with three fingers spread out, while he proceeded with the forefinger of the other hand to tell off the three requisites as he enumerated them. The gesture will be recognized by those acquainted with southern manners, as an eminently Italian one, and especially characteristic of the Italian pulpit.

"In the first place," he began with grave benignity, "it is necessary that you have a strong and lively faith in the mercy of God."

"That I have most earnestly, and most truly, father," answered the dying man.

"In the second place," continued Savonarola, with increasing gravity, "it is absolutely necessary that you restore, or give directions to your sons to restore, all that you have wrongfully taken from others."

At this injunction, we are told, the penitent seemed much distressed and downcast. And indeed he well might appear so; for the demand was an enormous one! However, after a brief and painful struggle with himself, Lorenzo consented to this also by a motion of his head.

"And lastly," resumed the Friar, while his voice and manner grew more sternly solemn, "you must restore to the Commonwealth of Florence the liberty of which you have deprived it."

Having spoken thus, Savonarola remained bent forward towards his penitent, with his eyes intently fixed on his face, while waiting with intense anxiety for his answer.

But he had asked more than a Medici, even on his deathbed, could grant. He could not,—no, though the price

A.D. 1492. were his eternal welfare,—he *could not* consent to undo that fabric of family greatness which he and his forefathers had for generations been labouring and plotting to build up. So Lorenzo, for all reply to the Friar's words, turned his face disdainfully away without answering a word. And so Savonarola left him, returning to Florence, without having pronounced the absolution demanded from him.

It may be observed, with respect to this anecdote, that Poliziano himself, on whose narrative those rely who would impugn the truth of the above account, makes little or no difference in his relation of what took place, except in substituting for Savonarola's last demand, the injunction to the penitent, "that he should prepare for death;" an absurd and irrelevant platitude, evidently foisted in for the purpose of supplying the void left by the omission of that last tremendous requisite, which it was quite impossible for Poliziano to reproduce. The stupid phrase substituted for it is senseless and irrelevant, because Lorenzo was then earnestly engaged in preparing for death. The conversation in which they were engaged turned wholly upon that preparation. Besides, how can it possibly be supposed, that Lorenzo should have made any difficulty about acceding to such an injunction as that he should prepare for death; or that, if he made no such difficulty, Savonarola should have departed without giving him the desired absolution? And that the absolution was not given is certain, and admitted on all hands.

Lorenzo the Magnificent died thus on the 8th of April, 1492; and his son Pietro reigned in his stead.

In person, we are told, Lorenzo was by no means fortunately gifted. His visage, says Signor Villari,* was a true representation of his character; having something especially sinister and displeasing about it. He was of olive-coloured

* Storia di Savonarola, vol. i., p. 44.

complexion, with a remarkably large mouth, a flat broad nose, and a nasal voice. But his eyes were good,—lively, penetrating; his forehead lofty; and his manner, when he wished to be winning, the most charming that it is possible to imagine. A.D. 1492.

No one, even of his enemies and detractors, says Guicciardini,* denies that he had great and remarkable powers of mind; and he goes on to cite in proof of it, his having succeeded in keeping himself in power in Florence for the space of twenty-three years; the credit he enjoyed among the contemporary princes of Italy, "and even with the Grand Turk, who in the latter years of his life presented him with a giraffe!"—his private and public speaking always marked by acumen and keen intelligence; and lastly, his letters. Besides all this there have not been wanting eulogists who have insisted on representing him as the greatest poet of his day.

There can be no doubt that Lorenzo de' Medici was a brilliant and clever man, with lively faculties, trained to find their gratification in liberal pursuits, and a quick and keen though probably by no means large intelligence. "He had the fairly good judgment," says Guicciardini, "of a sensible man; but it was not of a quality to be compared with his liveliness of parts, and he was guilty of many rash things in his career." He had neither the industry, nor the commercial sagacity, nor the political prudence of his father. His philosophizing was of a very princely quality; and in fact consisted of little else than a liking for the credit and the then highly fashionable appearance of having a court of literary men about him. One of the men of letters, who lived by his bounty and made the glory of his court, was however indeed his companion, friend, and a thoroughly kindred spirit to his own. But this intimate

* Storia Fiorentina, opere inedite, vol. iii., p. 84.

A.D. 1492. friend and companion, who constantly accompanied him, as Signor Villari says, in both his lawful and unlawful pleasures,* was not even by name or pretence a philosopher. It was Luigi Pulci, whose name still survives as the author of the witty but scandalous poem, the "Morgante Maggiore," in which an invocation to the Holy Virgin is followed by another addressed to Venus, to which succeeds a satire on the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. "And such as was the poem," continues Signor Villari, from whose life of Savonarola the above passage is taken, "such was the author of it; an eccentric and joyous spirit, if there ever was one; a sceptic full of irony, given up to the pursuit of pleasure, and the gratification of the senses, and devoted body and soul to Lorenzo." This was the sort of companionship which would seem, from all that has been recorded of Lorenzo's habits of life, more congenial and congruous with them, than that of Platonists or even Neoplatonists, however little their fantastic speculations were calculated to interfere in any way with the practical conduct of his life. But the fact, that this utterly shameless, though undeniably very clever, poem was written by its thoroughly profligate author at the special request and instigation of the Lady Clarice Orsini, Lorenzo's wife, and was recited in her presence at their table, amid Bacchanalian orgies, is perhaps still more strikingly suggestive of the tone of ideas and manners that must have been prevalent in that court, and of the sort of character likely to have been produced by the teaching of such a courtly circle.

Signor Villari attributes to Lorenzo a degree of merit as a poet, on the score of elegance of expression, of accuracy of observation, and a sentiment for nature, which, he says, were by no means common at that period, greater perhaps

* Vita di Savonarola, vol. i., p. 47.

than an English critic of the days subsequent to the extinction of our Dellacruscan dilettantism would be inclined to adjudge to him. And having allowed him this praise, he continues his careful and impartial estimate as follows. A.D. 1492.

"He was in fact thoroughly the man of his age. All the qualities of his soul were qualities of the intelligence only. His very manners were the result of intellectual culture, and not of amiability of heart. The protection he accorded to men of learning was a mere matter of state policy, or arose simply from a desire for amusement. Singular in truth was the manner of life he led. After having laboured with all the force of his will and of his intellect at the destruction of some remaining shred of Florentine liberty by means of some new law,—after having caused the confiscation of some citizen's property, or perhaps his death, to be decided on and ordered by the magistrates, he would betake himself to his Platonic Academy, and dispute with warm interest 'on virtue,' or 'on the immortality of the soul.' Then on quitting his 'Academy' he would sally forth in company with a knot of the most abandoned profligates of the city, singing through the streets his 'Carnival songs,' and steeping himself to the lips in the most unbridled orgies of all sorts. Then returning to his palace, and sitting down to table with Poliziano and Pulci, they would recite verses and discourse critically of poetry. And he threw himself with such entirety into each of these various occupations in turn, that it seemed for the time being as if each of them were the sole employment of his life. But what is most remarkable of all, is that in so varied a course of life, there cannot be cited of him any one single act or trait of virtue or of truly generous sentiment towards his subjects, towards his friends, or towards his family. And it may be considered as certain that if any such had been discoverable, his

A.D. 1492. indefatigable eulogists would not have omitted to commemorate it."*

The Carnival songs—those too celebrated "Canti Carnascialeschi," by Lorenzo, which were declared by his contemporaries, and among others by Pico della Mirandola, to be far superior to Dante's Divina Commedia—were compositions intended to be sung in the streets in Carnival time, when the young nobles of Florence were in the habit of parading the streets of the city in various disguises. As to the nature of these compositions, it is sufficient to repeat what Signor Villari says of them;—that the lowest refuse of the populace would in our days hesitate to pollute their mouths with the utterance of them, and that the shameless audacity of singing them in the public streets would be considered an offence against public decency, and would be punished as such.

As for the character of the times, and the influence that character may be presumed to have exercised on this truly representative man, the truth is, as it always is with regard to all epochs and all representative men, that the action of the man on the times, and of the "times"—that is to say, of the social atmosphere around him—on the man, was reciprocal. And of neither can anything worse be said than that they were admirably well suited to each other.

"Artists, literary men, politicians, nobles and populace alike," says Signor Villari in the masterly picture which he has drawn of the moral condition of Florence at the period in question, "were all alike thoroughly corrupted in mind and heart, and devoid of any public or private virtue, as well as of all sentiment of morality. Religion had become a mere instrument of government, or a base hypocrisy. The people had no faith;—neither civil, nor religious, nor moral, nor philosophical. Even scepticism itself did not exist in their minds as an active principle of

* Villari, Vita di Savonarola, vol. i., p. 45.

energy. An apathetic indifference for every principle whatsoever was their dominant characteristic; and in their features full of intellect, of acuteness, and of subtle intelligence, a cold smile of superiority and compassion was the prevailing expression, called forth by any exhibition of enthusiasm for a noble or generous idea. They did not meet any such with opposition, or with doubts, as a sceptic philosopher might have done. They simply looked down on it with compassion; and this inert force of theirs opposed a far greater obstacle to all virtue, than a declared and open war against it would have done. Such a condition of morals necessarily had a very powerful influence on intellectual culture. Philosophy in fact was reduced to mere erudition. * * * * Literature consisted of mere philology, or of imitations of Virgil, of Homer, of Pindar, and so on." A.D. 1492.

But it is to be remembered that such a condition of society not only helped to make Lorenzo what he was, and, being such as both he and the times were, suited his inclinations; but was also very favourable to his more serious political views. And there can be no doubt that the accusation, which has been so often made against Lorenzo, as well as against several of the later Medici, both by their contemporaries and by subsequent historians, that they strove of set and deliberate political purpose to demoralize and debauch their subjects, is true.

"Lorenzo," says Signor Villari, "seconded the age in all its tendencies. From being corrupt he made it enormously corrupt, pushing it forward in the down-hill path of degradation by every means. Abandoning himself to pleasure, he caused his subjects to wallow yet deeper in the same mire, with the view of stupefying and brutalizing them. In fact, the life of Florence had in his day become a very orgy of festivals and pleasure."*

† Villari, Vita di Savonarola, vol. i., p. 44.

A.D. 1492. There was one special kind of tyranny and means of despotism practised by Lorenzo, which may be fitly mentioned in connection with the above notices of the moral condition of Florentine society in his day, because the possibility of such an interference with the free-will of a community furnishes a very suggestive illustration of the state of social feeling on one peculiarly important subject.

No Florentine citizen of a social position at all above the middle class, was, we are assured, permitted to marry except in accordance with the wishes and plans of Lorenzo. After the proscription of the Pazzi, the female scions of that family were not permitted to marry, for fear that they might form alliances with families powerful enough to give umbrage to the tyrant. And for similar motives he was anxious to prevent alliances between families which, if bound together by such ties, might possibly become dangerously powerful. The testimony of Guicciardini is formal on this subject. "Suspicions of this kind," he writes,* "induced him to take care that men, already influential by themselves, should not become more so by alliance with others. And he contrived to match the citizens in such sort as should not give him umbrage on this score. In order to avoid marriages thus objectionable, he constrained many young men of leading families to marry persons whom they would not otherwise have chosen. And in a word the system was brought to such a pitch, that no marriage at all above the middle ranks of life was made without his participation and licence."

Truly a community among whom such an amount and kind of tyranny was possible, could not under any circumstances have been capable of any of the higher kinds of political civilization.

Such was Lorenzo "the Magnificent," and such was

* Storia Fiorentina, opere inedite, vol. iii., p. 90.

the true character of the period and the society to which he has given a too celebrated name. It was during that period, and mainly by the influence of that man, those seeds of depravity, imbecility, and worthlessness were deeply laid in the Tuscan character, which, according to the fitting and inexorable order of the world's moral government, produced as their result and retribution three centuries of nullity and degradation, and rendered the only possible path to resuscitation and recovery one beset with difficulties, doubts, and sufferings. A.D. 1492

But though the work of ultimately destroying Tuscan liberty may be with truth said to have been accomplished by Lorenzo and in his days, inasmuch as the nation, as left by him, had no longer among its people the amount of virtue absolutely needful for the salvation of any social body; and inasmuch as from this time forth the Nemesis of events seems to have taken the destinies of the doomed city with ever-increasing rapidity of fateful force into its own hands;—though Florence may be considered to have drunk the fatal poison cup which was to destroy her, the end, as has been said, was not quite yet. The original constitutional vigour of the patient was such as caused an interval of violent convulsions and desperate struggle before the closing scene, which it will be the business of the remaining pages of this narrative to recount.

END OF VOL. III.

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